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6-Year-Old Shot Dead

Soldiers Kill Three Palestinians

The casualty toll this week among Palestinians shot by Israeli soldiers in the occupied territories rose to three dead. The fatalities included a six-year-old child.

Israeli regular army and border police relentlessly stepped up their repression in which the three were killed and 14 Palestinians injured.

Six-year-old Ayman Jundiya was shot dead by an Israeli soldier near the centre of Gaza City September 20. The boy's father sustained a shoulder injury in the incident. The father and son had been travelling through the town when an Israeli patrol ordered their car to a halt. According to Israel Radio, the father sped on after which the soldiers fired at the car tyres. The radio report did not mention how a bullet entered the child's abdomen causing his death. Ayman's father, who was hospitalised with a shoulder wound was later released.

Israel Radio quoted senior Israeli military officers as saying that the soldiers had merely acted according to superior's orders. It was not clear if this meant the soldier would be reprimanded in any way for his action. The radio said, however, that the army had set up an investigative team to look into the tragic incident. International Red Cross representatives in Israel declared their intention to investigate the shooting.

Another Gaza youth, 18-year-old Jamal Awad, died September 24 while in Beer Sheba hospital. He was undergoing treatment for bullet wounds he sustained six days earlier. Israeli soldiers shot Awad September 18 on the pretext that he did not respond to soldiers' orders to stop for an ID check.

Doctors extracted four bullets from different parts of his body and kept him in intensive care until he died. Awad was a resident of Nusseirat refugee camp in Gaza.

Also in Gaza, five-year-old Omar Shihab narrowly escaped death after being shot by soldiers September 24. He is listed in critical condition.

According to eyewitness reports the child had been playing in front of his father's grocery store when bullets fired randomly by soldiers struck him. Israel Radio alleged the child was in a vehicle that did not halt when ordered. Omar sustained injuries in his hip.

Ayman Jundiya, 6.

In Hebron, Marwan Jamjoum, 20, was shot September 24 by soldiers in the centre of town.

In Gaza city, Munther Abdel Aziz, 18, was shot dead early in the evening of September 17, when an army patrol opened fire at four youths in the main street of Omar al-Mukhtar. Military sources said the youth refused to obey their orders to stop.

The spate of Israeli army attacks on civilian targets follows the recent decision by the Israeli government to crack down on Palestinians in the occupied territories. The crackdown is said to quell Palestinian resistance to Israeli administration. To meet their aim the authorities released several hundred regular army personnel, mainly paratroopers who had served in the invasion of Lebanon in 1982, to roam West Bank and Gaza Streets.

Collective 'punishments' by the military have also increased the sense of terror and repression among the local population. In the last week alone, the military imposed curfews on four refugee camps and one town for various periods. The camps of Balata, Askar and Ain Beit al-Ma' were all curfewed for several hours on September 25 during which Israeli soldiers were reported to be gathering male residents at the centre of the camps in order to humiliate them.

Three residents of Balata were reported to have been beaten by soldiers. According to *Al Tali'a* weekly, one of the men, Hamdan Abu al-Iz, had to be hospitalised for injuries sustained after being shot with a rubber bullet. In al-Ama'ri camp near Ramallah a curfew was imposed September 22. Settlers were reported to have joined soldiers in a search and arrest campaign during the curfew. Also in Anabta the same day, dozens of Israeli soldiers entered the northern West Bank town, imposed a curfew and rampaged through the town searching houses and randomly arresting youths. The youths were accused of throwing stones.

Mothers Escalate Strike After Asqalan Prison Raid

Alarmed by reports of teargassing in Asqalan prison two weeks ago relatives of the Palestinian prisoners in Gaza escalated their sit-in strike begun last week into a hunger strike. They are demanding information concerning the conditions of their sons.

At least two Palestinian political prisoners were seriously wounded when Israeli prison guards stormed inmate cells September 11 using teargas. They also reportedly clubbed the prisoners.

Al Ittihad Arabic daily reported September 20 that in the wake of the prisoner-exchange May 20, the prison authority had revived measures of intimidation and humiliation. Reports are that prisoners are being forced to stand during the daily head count. On September 10, the prison director informed prisoners of the new requirement. When prisoners refused to comply September 11, more than 100 soldiers, gas-masked and armed with truncheons and shields, raided the cells. According to a letter smuggled from the prison, the guards beat and evacuated prisoners from cell number one and seized all personal belongings such as transistor radios, books and clothes. The letter said soldiers then turned to cell number two, where the prisoners threatened to burn the prison. The guards, however, attacked the prisoners with teargas just as the inmates set fire to the room. The soldiers then evacuated the detainees one by one making them walk through two lines of soldiers who beat them repeatedly with clubs.

During the three days that followed the prison administration withheld food or water from prisoners. It is also reported that soldiers searched and intimidated the prisoners daily.

Family visits to prisoners were cancelled after the clash.

More than 50 mothers, sisters and wives of Palestinian prisoners have been staging an open sit-in at the Gaza office of the International Red Cross (ICRC) since September 18. According to sources in Gaza, the strikers declared a hunger strike on September 24, following the Israeli authorities' failure to respond to their pleas to know the condition of their imprisoned relatives. ICRC representatives tried twice on September 19 and 20 to visit the prisoners, but failed.

The women sent two letters to the ICRC demanding they visit the prisoners and report their conditions. The protestors requested in the second letter that they be permitted to sleep in the ICRC waiting room until they are assured of the safety of the prisoners. The letter stated that some of the strikers' health has been deteriorating as a result of the hunger strike, but they refuse to leave unless they hear from their sons.

Israeli troops entered the ICRC offices September 24 but left at noon without making any arrests.

Earlier, in response to a call by three local women's committees in the Jerusalem area, the Working Women's Committee, the Women's Work Committee and the Palestinian Women's Committee organised a sit-in at Jerusalem's ICRC office September 21. The sit-in is in solidarity with the Asqalan prisoners. Dozens of women are participating.

An elderly blind woman with two sons in Asqalan prison told journalists about the brutal attack by prison guards on the prisoners. She also demanded that she (and all prisoners' families) be allowed to visit her sons.

The mother of political prisoner Qassem Kamal, 24, from Jerusalem also described to journalists the treatment which her son was subject to. According to *Al Mithaq* daily, she told reporters that her son had had a nervous breakdown which resulted from excessive force and the taking of blood from his fingers.

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Palestinians Cautiously Optimistic About Thatcher's Decision

News Analysis
by Daoud Kuttab

Palestinians were cautiously optimistic this week with the latest British decision to officially receive a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation next month.

What makes the decision important is the source. Having originated from Margaret Thatcher — leader of the British Conservative Party, representative of one of the most important nations in Western Europe and America's best Nato ally — the decision is viewed by Palestinians as representing a breakthrough in Western attitudes towards the PLO.

Thatcher's decision announced September 20 specified that British Foreign Minister Sir Geoffrey Howe will meet two members of the PLO's executive committee in October.

Personally, Thatcher, who heads the Conservative Friends of Israel and is a self-proclaimed crusader against 'terrorism', has taken a great political risk by her decision to host members of the PLO.

As leader of the British Conservative Party she could be seen as initiating a new era of a more even-handed policy in the party. The Conservatives have long been opposed to any kind of meeting with PLO members. In fact, some members of Thatcher's party have came out against her decision. The *Daily Telegraph*, distributed to more than one million British Conservatives, lashed out at the Prime Minister for her decision to meet the joint delegation. Labour Party leaders however have praised Thatcher's decision calling it a "turnabout."

On the European scene, the United Kingdom can be viewed as merely catching up to decisions taken by other European countries like Italy and France. The joint delegation has already visited a number of European countries as well as China this summer. Since the 1980 Venice declaration, which passed due to the efforts of Lord Carrington, Britain has not taken any concrete steps towards carrying out many of its provisions. The Venice declaration, accepted by the European community, recognised the Palestinian's right to self-determination.

Mayor Mohammed Milhem

Bishop Elia Khoury

Internationally, Thatcher's decision puts the US administration in an embarrassing position. While the Reagan administration could have dismissed the delegation visiting Italy or claim that France's Mitterand is anyway leftist, these arguments are invalid when Reagan's closest NATO ally agrees to meet with the delegation. Palestinians positively view Thatcher's bold move yet it is primarily seen as creating possibilities *vis-a-vis* the political initiative with the United States.

The British government had previously agreed, as reported in *Al Fajr's* September 20 edition, to meet with the Jordanian-Palestinian delegation. The new factor in Thatcher's decision is her agreement to meet prior to US Special Envoy Richard Murphy's meeting. British officials apparently felt the US government was dragging its feet and Thatcher wanted to give the political process a push.

Palestinians are yet cautious about the move because they realise that Margaret Thatcher's surprise announcement in Aqaba was not done for love of the Palestinians and moderate Arabs. Granted Thatcher felt guilty for the fact that prior to her visit no British prime minister had ever visited Jordan. But her diplomatic decision, which amounts to *de facto* recognition of the PLO, must have originated also from British economic concerns.

With Jordan and Saudi Arabia's weapon purchases refused by the United States, Thatcher realised that the United Kingdom is the last alternative to the Arabs before turning to the Soviet Union. The presence of the Jordanian chief-of-staff in the Soviet Union at the time is a sufficient hint that Jordan wouldn't hesitate to turn to the East. The sudden Saudi decision to withdraw US 16 billion dollars from American banks (the US allowed only US 3 billion dollars to be withdrawn) must have also been fresh in Thatcher's mind.

The British Prime Minister's announcement was not without conditions. In her brief announcement, Thatcher said, "We know Bishop Khoury and Mr Milhem to be men of peace. They personally support a peaceful settlement on the basis of relevant United Nations resolutions and are opposed to terrorism and violence. I know that they will reaffirm their position during their stay in London."

It is clear that Mrs Thatcher's choice of words had been previously agreed on with the PLO through Jordanian officials. Interestingly, the British Prime Minister by accepting to meet PLO officials appears to be differentiating between terrorism — meant here indiscriminate killing of innocent civilians — and armed resistance. Such a differentiation long advocated by Palestinians is welcomed in the Palestinian arena. Such a statement also appears to signify a difference in Thatcher's mind between the PLO and the IRA.

Mrs Thatcher's latest actions must be seen as courageous when viewed from where Thatcher stands. But despite its positive elements, British diplomacy cannot stop with that. If Mrs Thatcher is serious in her pursuit of peace, she must follow this decision through with clear and unequivocal recognition of the PLO. Such a move would be instrumental in obtaining serious US *rapprochement* with the Palestinians' sole legitimate representative and would remove age old Arab scepticism about Britain.

Al Fajr staff congratulate our colleague Daoud Kuttab and his wife Nuha on the birth of their baby girl,

Tamara

September 13

PLO Denounces Killings in Cyprus Port

The PLO office in Nicosia, Cyprus, denounced the killing September 25 of three Israelis on board an Israeli-registered yacht moored at Larnaca's port. The three Israelis were suspected by attackers of being informants for the Israeli navy.

In a statement following the incident, the PLO office in Nicosia said it was not responsible for the killers' actions. "The PLO condemns any terrorist action perpetrated upon Cypriot soil. We assure our Cypriot friends that we bear no responsibility for such action," the statement read. The killers were identified as two Palestinians and one European.

The three Israelis were identified as Reuven and Esther Paltzur of Haifa and Avraham Avneri of Arad. They were in their second week docked at Larnaca's marina when the three armed men raided their vessel at 5:00 am, September 25. The gunmen shot the woman as she apparently attempted to escape and held the two men captive in the vessel's small cabin. They then informed Cypriot police who encircled the marina that they demanded the release of 20 Palestinians kidnapped from the sea by the Israeli navy several weeks ago.

Some nine hours later, the gunmen apparently shot the two Israelis and surrendered to the police. Earlier attempts by an Egyptian diplomat and two PLO officials to negotiate with the gunmen proved fruitless.

During the siege, an anonymous caller to the French Press Agency (AFP) in Jerusalem claimed that Fatah Force No. 17, an elite unit created by Yasir Arafat, was involved. The caller said 20 Palestinians illegally held by the Israelis be released as a condition for the release of the three Israeli captives.

Israeli defence sources were quoted in the *Jerusalem Post* as doubting the involvement of Fatah leaders including Arafat in the attack.

The anonymous caller suggested the three Israelis were involved in aiding the Israeli navy by following the moves of Arabs and Palestinians on the Eastern Mediterranean coast. The Israeli navy currently holds four boats illegally captured in four raids since August 24. The boats, all with Palestinians, Arabs and Europeans aboard, were in international waters at the time and were thought to be travelling from or to the Lebanese coast and north Africa. All except the European passengers are still being held captive by the Israeli army irregardless of international law.

The Israeli communist newspaper *Al Ittihad* quoted Israel Radio as saying that "rumours in Cyprus have it that the Israeli vessel had moored at Larnaca's marina September 16 to keep a close watch on vesels carrying Palestinians heading towards Lebanon to help Israeli navy locate and intercept these vehicles."

Meanwhile, the Israeli government vowed to revenge the killing of the three Israelis. "The murderers and those who sent them will not escape punishment," an official government communique said.

Large Scale Arrests in Golan Heights

Reports from the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights indicate large scale arrests and land closures are increasing there at an alarming rate.

Al Fajr learned that a total of 30 youths between 15-18 years old were detained early this month. The detention, a source told *Al Fajr* followed a landmine explosion near the ceasefire line with Syria. One person was reportedly injured in the incident.

Golani residents reportedly dismiss the notion of any of the detained youths being responsible for the landmine. "Is it possible that our youth would plant mines in an area where their friends and family members meet relatives across the ceasefire line?" one resident asked.

In addition to the landmine explosion, several Golan locales suspected of serving as weapon caches were recently blown up by the Israeli army. Residents report that vast Golan areas, including apple groves and public roads, have been closed under security pretexts. The closed areas also adjoin the border with Syria. Residents are now prohibited from entering the closed areas between 6:00 pm to 6:00 am.

The Israeli army has recently been strengthening fortifications on the ceasefire line in the belief that a possible increase in hostilities may occur soon. Golanis have protested the closure because of its interruption of their daily work. Farmers say the restriction hampers the apple harvesting season which is just beginning.

In a related story, many Golanis who accepted Israeli identity cards after the formal annexation of the Syrian Heights have reportedly turned in their IDs and publicly apologised. Golanis maintain their insistence on refusing to socialise with Israeli citizens. Golani soccer teams have refused to take part in soccer tournaments with Israeli teams. Instead, they hold their own tournaments, and play matches with West Bank and Gazan teams.

Israeli Kills Mentally Handicapped Arab

A mentally handicapped man was shot dead in the streets of East Jerusalem this week.

Ali Mashhour, 37, a resident of al-Sawahre al-Sharqiyeh village near Jerusalem, was shot down early September 24. Mashhour had earlier been seen roaming the streets by merchants on Salah ed-Din Street. The 65-year-old Israeli man who shot him said Mashhour had "made a pass" at his 50-year-old wife. The Israeli and his wife had just come from prayers at Jerusalem's Wailing Wall.

Mashhour is apparently well-known in the Jerusalem area for his "calm but unstable behaviour." Jerusalem merchants told *Al Fajr* he virtually lived on the streets, surviving on handouts and enjoying comic exchanges with passersby and city merchants.

Israel Radio, which dispatched reporters to the scene, carried conflicting reports of the incident. In one news broadcast an hour after the shooting the radio said the Israeli had killed Mashhour after the Palestinian had approached his wife with what he believed were intentions to harass her. Two hours later, the radio altered its version. It then quoted the assailant as saying that Mashhour threatened the Israeli couple with a knife, and "insulted and cursed Jews in general." No knife was however found in the vicinity of the murder and later testimony by the assailant's wife contradicted his version of self-defence. In both versions the radio insisted the armed civilian had shot several warning shots into the air before firing twice directly at Mashhour.

Eyewitnesses told *Al Fajr* they did not see the Israeli fire warning shots in the air. According to eyewitness reports, Mashhour fell to the ground suffering from abdomen and head wounds. When the police arrived they pronounced Mashhour dead. Mashhour's body was later taken to hospital where the cause of death was determined to be head injuries resulting from a bullet.

An angry crowd soon gathered after hearing the shots and foiled an attempt by the Israeli assailant to flee the scene. They reportedly pounded his car with metal bars and broke his windshield. They then made a citizens' arrest until a police force arrived. The man was remanded into custody but later released on bail before the Yom Kippur holiday.

Mashhour was buried later in the day in his home village in the presence of dozens of relatives and village residents.

Local residents fear such incidents could increase since Israeli civilians are permitted to carry loaded weapons as they travel through Arab neighbourhoods. Mashhour's death is seen as a direct consequence of such a policy. In protest of Mashhour's murder and increasing incidents of wanton endangerment to Palestinian life by armed Israelis, the Old City of Jerusalem and all of East Jerusalem struck September 26. All shops were closed tight in what was seen as a very successful strike.

Mourners carry the body of Ali Mashhour (top). Body after autopsy (bottom)./AO photo.

Tantur land without topsoil

Settlers Rip Off Tantur Topsoil

by Baher Ashhab

Out to turn a profit in more ways than one, Jewish settlers from Jerusalem's Gilo settlement have been caught stealing valuable Arab topsoil.

Eyewitnesses told *Al Fajr* the settlers have stolen nearly US 200,000 dollars worth of rich topsoil from Tantur, south of Jerusalem. The land in question, estimated at 100 dunums, is planted with olive trees. Most of the land is owned and farmed by members of the Palestinian Syrian Orthodox Church.

The Gilo settler group, allegedly spearheaded by Gilo resident and contractor Abraham Shalom, was caught red-handed stealing the soil September 19, according to *Al Fajr* sources. But the theft campaign apparently began more than two years ago, *Al Fajr* has learned, and only intensified over the last three weeks.

Landowners report that the settlers enter the land, which is adjacent to the settlement, with pick-up trucks and bulldozers. The work is usually done in late afternoons when the settlers strip the soil from the roots of the olive trees and from the sides of dirt roads leading to the site. Landowners say the soil is then sold to farmers and other settlers for a large profit, almost US 10 dollars a cubic metre. Landowners told *Al Fajr* over 20,000 cubic metres of soil have been taken, thus depriving the trees of much needed nourishment.

In place of the soil, the settler group has dumped garbage and other debris, cluttering up a once picturesque landscape. Landowners say subsequent complaints to Gilo settlers and the Jerusalem police have proved fruitless. The landowners worry that the Israeli authorities might soon see the garbage and declare the land a neglected agricultural area. The plot would then be confiscated and possibly used for Gilo expansion, landowners told *Al Fajr*.

According to Elias Mourad, a Bethlehem textile merchant and member of the Syrian Orthodox Church, the settlers had just that in mind when they initiated the scheme over two years ago. In addition to making personal profit out of selling the soil to farmers and settlement residents, they plan to prepare the way for the land's confiscation, he said.

Landowners say that on several occasions they successfully halted the work by chasing the settlers away or blocking dirt roads leading to the site. This was however only temporary. This prompted the owners to hire watchmen.

On September 19, the watchmen called Jamal Salman, a landowner and Bethlehem municipality secretary. He rushed to the site with eight others and apprehended the perpetrators stealing soil from the land. Salman told *Al Fajr* he confronted them and later chased the settlers away to a nearby brick factory run by Abraham Shalom. The two groups first fought, he said, after which the settlers were warned never to trespass on the land again. Salman then filed another comlaint at the Jerusalem police station. The ordeal prompted Bethlehem Mayor Elias Freij to condemn the settlers' action in an interview with Israel Radio, September 21.

Murad said prior to 1967 the church had planned to construct a "model village" housing over 45 Syrian Orthodox families. They were prevented from doing so by Israeli authorities soon after occupation. Murad said they have been battling the authorities in court ever since to maintain their hold on the land.

According to sources in the Ecumenical Institute for Theological Research at Tantur, which overlooks the site, the settlers have treated the Arab land as if it were theirs. They say the settlers entered it as they pleased and stole soil from plots they chose at random. Observing the site from the roof of the Institute, gives one a clear picture of the extent of the damage. Not only is the availability of the soil a goal but also to ruin as large an area as possible. Settlers have left garbage and debris, at places which seemed like good topsoil.

Lutfi Azar, house manager of the Institute, told *Al Fajr* what was once a beautiful backyard for the institute is now a disaster area.

Jewish settler confronted by Arabs

Palestinians Complain of Army Humiliation

by Salam Sharif

A man is told to get off his mule and kiss the brute. Another man carrying a precious cargo of eggs is stopped and all 30 of his eggs crushed.

These stories, and more reminiscent of German youths taunting religious Jews in pre-war Germany, have begun to accumulate in the press. Reports abound of Israeli army taunts and humiliating acts forced upon the occupied territories' population.

Israel's Chief-of-Staff Moshe Levy has denied the stories and allegations of inhuman treatment of local Palestinians by the Israeli army. Levy alleged the accusations were false, and aimed at hindering the army's work in the territories.

Nevertheless stories of humiliation carried out by Israeli soldiers in various regions are reported in the Israeli and local press. Details of unprecedented harassment can be heard everywhere in the occupied territories. In order to report such practices firsthand *Al Fajr* toured Hebron and Ramallah during the week, where many stories were heard and are here reported.

In Hebron, Safwan, a youth in his twenties, was going to the Mamoun Pharmacy at about 3:30 pm on September 21. He was stopped by a soldier who ordered him to present his identity card. Safwan did so, but the soldiers asked why the card was worn out. Safwan replied, "because it fell in water the other day." The soldier gave him back the ID then noticing the sandals on his feet, the soldier asked why he wore them. "Because I have no money to buy shoes," Safwan answered. "Are they comfortable?" asked the soldiers.

By this time, Safwan was tired of the questions and feeling a bit sick. He answered sharply that it was none of the soldier's business. In response, he was slapped. The soldiers then hit him repeatedly and ordered Safwan to turn his face to the wall and to remain standing.

Two youths, one of whom was laughing, passed by. Safwan's soldier called them over and asked for their ID. "Why do you laugh?" he asked them. "Because my friend was telling me a joke," the boy answered. So the soldier ordered him to stand against the wall near Safwan. He gave the other his ID and ordered him to go.

The 'popular' soldier called another youth passing by and asked him why his hair was long. The soldier also took his ID, beat him repeatedly and ordered him to stand against the wall with the others.

Three other soldiers approached and joined the 'fun' ordering the youths to raise their hands and start walking. They walked for nearly a kilometre reaching the area near al-Ibrahimi Mosque.

Safwan grew tired and dropped his hands but immediately was beaten with gunbutts despite his attempts to explain that he was sick. The youths then hurried on, but the soldiers alternately ordered them to walk slower and then faster and so on.

When they reached the police station near the mosque, they were stopped and told to stand against the wall. Safwan, sick and exhausted, could not obey the order. Soldiers then forced him to do so by beating him. There he and the others were left to stand an hour more. An officer then came with two other soldiers and ordered the youths to dance. He turned to Safwan and said," You are sick so do not dance. Sing instead." Safwan refused saying he did not know how to sing. He was again beaten and then ordered along with the other two to take their IDs and return home.

Al Fajr heard another story told by Rushdi, a 75-year-old man from Hebron. Rushdi was walking in the market of the Casabah a few days ago when he was stopped by soldiers. They told him they wanted to search him. He was then led to a corner in a nearby spot called Kantarat al-Shaloudi where he was forced to strip off all his clothes. Another man of the same age was also brought there. He was ordered to walk for about 100 metres with only his underwear on.

According to another eyewitness report, an old man was ordered to take of the saddle of his donkey. When he had done so, he was told to put the saddle on his own back and crawl on his hands and feet like a donkey.

On September 22, a tale told by more than one person occurred. It seems a young man was stopped by soldiers who asked him how he made a living. "I do almost anything," he answered. "So," the soldier said, "go and kiss that girl over there." The young man did, they say, in order to get rid of them.

Another eyewitness told *Al Fajr* that at midday September 23, a youth and his sister were walking in the *Suk* (market), when they were stopped by soldiers who asked to see his ID. He was then given it back and ordered to go. The sister was kept. When he had walked for no more than 20 metres, he was called again by the officer who ordered him explain how he had left his young sister with soldiers who had not seen their wives or girlfriends for more than six months. "You have no honour," said the officer to the youth. He was then given a lesson in morals and manners.

Nader, a handsome youth sitting in his father's money-changing shop, was called into the street by two soldiers who demanded his ID. One of the soldiers began to conduct a body search but Nader says it was done in a stroking, indecent way. Nader objected. The angry soldier said, "Do you want to teach me how to search?" and struck him.

The soldiers took Nader's ID. Nader then closed the shop and went to the military headquarters to file a complaint. It was not long before the same soldiers returned and gave the ID to Nader's neighbour.

Um Mesbah, a widow and mother of six children, said she was even harassed by the army. The week before last a bunch of black-bereted soldiers broke into her home and shot at the water tanks. When she protested the damage and loss of water, she was beaten harshly in front of the children. She says she filed a complaint with the officer.

MH, 18, a youth living near al-Ibrahimi Mosque, said he must pass daily through the *Suk*, going and coming to his home. He was nearly killed at the hands of soldiers September 23, yet a woman who cleans the public toilets there interfered to wrest him from their grasp.

MH tells the story. He says he was tired of presenting his ID every time he passes and tried to explain to the soldiers who wanted to see his ID that he passed there all the time. He was severely beaten.

Another story is told about Isma'il, 17. He lives in the Casabah and enjoys sitting on a stone at the streetside. Following the end of Hebron's curfew, he was taken and beaten four times for sitting on the stone. The last time the soldiers tore up his ID.

Shahir, 18, a resident of the Aqabah area in the Casabah, made an amusing figure September 16. At about noon, residents of the area were ordered by the army to come out of their homes and gather for a search. Being lame, the soldiers noticed that Shahir walked funny. They ordered him to walk several times in front of them. They they ordered him to run, while they seemed to enjoy the spectacle.

When asked about going to the Casabah, Nasser, 18, told *Al Fajr*, "No one goes there these days unless he is obliged to do so. Just this morning I was beaten because I could not understand what the soldier wanted. He shouted at me in Hebrew and I thought he wanted me to stand with my face to the wall. I started walking towards it but he motioned with his hands in a way that appeared to me that he was saying go home. When I started to do so he swooped down on me saying in Arabic, 'Don't you understand?' and beat me. Then he pulled me against the wall and checked my ID.

For journalists the West Bank and Gaza Strip were inviting areas last week, following the publication in the Israeli media of Arabs forced to kiss the hind end of donkeys and the like.

Another story is that of Salim, from Ramallah. He was just leaving the bank when a soldier ordered him to present his ID. Trying to get it out of his pocket, the soldier ordered him to hurry up. Another soldier came up and began to beat him. He said both apologised when they found out he was a Christian.

Some drivers were ordered to take off the tyres of their cars at checkposts, they said. Vegetable vendors in the market were ordered to take off their clothes during searches. In one incident a man in the market was ordered to throw away his cigarette, and was beaten harshly when he refused. During the body searches, soldiers made obscene gestures at the victims. In one case, a man responded by slapping the soldier in the face.

Soldiers 'palling around' outside an Arab shop in Hebron / John Egan photo

Iron gates closing off the Hebron Casabah./John Egan photo.

Gun-toting settlers on 'guard duty' in Hebron./John Egan photo.

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Soldiers Given Carte Blanche to Shoot Arabs

Once again untamed Israeli soldiers running loose in West Bank and Gazan streets in the name of 'preserving peace and security' have claimed another life. This week's innocent victim is a six-year-old boy from Gaza. According to Israeli army tales, a Gaza driver failed to heed orders to stop his car. Soldiers, the tale goes on, then fired warning shots in the air. When the car continued travelling, soldiers opened fire at the car – hitting the driver and his six-year-old son sitting next to him. Both were critically wounded and the little boy later died in hospital.

Israel's military establishment dismissed the whole affair as an 'accident.' It even went as far as praising the soldiers for acting according to superior orders, the orders being to shoot when the least bit threatened. Of course what constitutes a threat was left up to individual soldiers.

Only days earlier another 18-year-old Gaza youth was also shot dead by Israeli soldiers. Reason: refused to halt when ordered. The soldiers, so said the military, shot at the youth's legs. The bullets missed their target and found their way to the youth's head, immediately killing him.

In another incident last week, an Israeli soldier shot at an Arab bus in East Jerusalem wounding six passengers. The soldier claimed someone in the bus had thrown a fire bomb at him, prompting him to fire on the bus loaded with passengers. No one bothered either to explain how anyone could be stupid enough to prepare a molotov cocktail on a moving bus with no means of escape, or to explain the absence of the fire bomb as evidence.

All the explanations soldiers have given to justify the shootings are highly implausible even to the average Israeli. But the military – particularly the defence minister, his chief-of-staff and army commanders in the occupied territories – feel the shootings are justified and within the soldiers' 'line of duty.' This means there will be no inquiry, no prosecution, no disciplinary hearing nor anything of this sort. What it does mean is that soldiers can return to their patrols in Arab cities feeling safe enough to shoot at any Arab they wish and for any reason. If indeed they do shoot one all they are required to do is to repeat the same story about the victim refusing to stop.

The Israeli government, by giving a *carte blanche* to soldiers to shoot at Arabs, is not only violating the Fourth Geneva Convention regarding the protection of civilians under occupation, but is also cheapening Arab life. And when such an attitude is taken in official circles it is not long before it filters down to the community at large. Such total disregard for Palestinian life is frightening and the consequences are grave.

Rather than hearing world outrage over such Israeli action, the Palestinians are faced with a US veto of a UN Security Council resolution condemning recent Israeli measures in the occupied West Bank and Gaza. Such world apathy does not help to relieve the suffering of Palestinians in the Israeli-occupied territories. The situation in the West Bank and Gaza is highly critical. It requires immediate action by the world community to prevent it from developing into a civil war whose victims will be innocent bystanders.

In Pursuit of an Elusive Goal: Peace

by Hanna Siniora

The present political *status quo* of the Palestinian people viewed from the impasse of no war, no peace seems bleak and pessimistic. Yet Palestinians (not only the one-third under Israeli occupation) cannot allow the harshness of the situation to dim their relentless drive to realise their goal of self-determination and their drive aimed at Israel and the United States.

In order to achieve Palestinian rights, the political leadership have assessed with realism what can be accomplished; and this realism is the guideline of the present peace offensive that the PLO leadership in conjuction with the Jordanian government are pursuing in their political efforts to win American recognition in order to reach a political settlement with the arch enemy Israel.

This present pragmatism within the Palestinian camp evolved slowly and can be attributed to the loss of faith in Arab regimes and a growing need to rely primarily on Palestinian efforts and Palestinian plans to achieve the right to political self-determination. This evolutionary process began seriously after the Arab debacle of June 1967.

The PLO, created in 1964 by the Arab League and at the personal effort of the late President Nasser of Egypt, was intended to blunt mass discontent among Palestinians for the lack of a coherent Arab plan to fulfil Arab promises to liberate Palestine. Until then political activity was banned and poorly organised as a result of the loss of 78 percent of Palestine in 1948 and the fall of the West Bank under Jordanian control and the Gaza Strip under Egyptian control.

The shock of the June 1967 war changed the rules of the game. The lame duck PLO, which was intended to be used as a tool in the hands of the Arab governments, became the last and only hope of the Palestinian people, and the liberation movement gradually won the hearts of the people. It earned their respect and won its role as the sole representative of the Palestinian people.

The PLO quickly realised that Arab support is like shifting sand and so it tried to walk a perpetual tightrope hoping to draw on Pan Arab support without getting involved in internal and inter Arab rivalries. This was not always successful. In September 1970, as a result of the bloody clash with Jordan, the PLO shifted to Lebanon to regroup and reorganise. Palestinians genuinely tried to avoid involvement in the internal Lebanese political struggle which was slowly moving toward a civil war. They tried to learn from past mistakes which resulted in their eviction from Jordan. Instead they worked on raising the health and educational standards in southern Lebanon, and to a great extent succeeded in alleviating the lot of the Shi'ite population there. This probably set the stage for the political awakening of the Lebanese Shi'ite community.

The PLO, in 1974, felt confident enough to open the door for the political process. This was the year that the leadership began using the political option as a tool to achieve the goal of the liberation movement, ie, the right to self-determination. This same year also saw the birth of the Rejectionist Front within the liberation movement. Political conditions were not favourable, however. As a result of the crushing military victory of the June 1967 war, Israel began nurturing grandiose dreams of expansionism, and gradually stopped seeking a political settlement and began implementing a creeping annexationist policy. This left no room for peace in the region. The Likud ascent to power in 1977 accelerated their settlement policy and the expropriation of land. The Begin government declared that it had no intentions of withdrawing from the occupied territories, and that the Palestinians can express their right of self-determination in Jordan.

Even during this period of the rise of ultra-nationalism and the swing to the right in Israeli politics, the PLO did not despair and remained consistent in its pursuit of a political settlement. It signalled its peaceful intentions by agreeing to a ceasefire with the Likud government, which was negotiated by Ambassador Philip Habib, at a time when the PLO was at a high point militarily in its preparedness and effectiveness.

The 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon then had several goals, foremost among them to stop the development of the political process, end contacts between the PLO and the US administration, discourage normalisation of relations, destroy the PLO and its infrastructure, create a Maronite protectorate, and open the way for complete domination of the occupied territories.

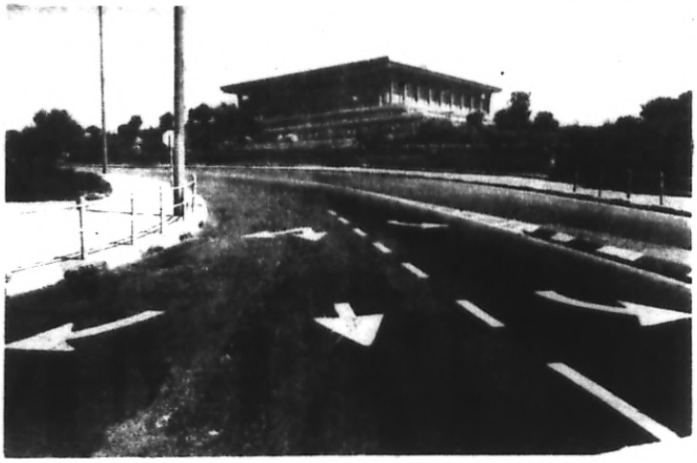
During the long siege of Beirut, Arafat and most of the PLO leadership became convinced of the lack of Arab unity and support. They began to evolve plans to lessen Palestinian dependence on empty Arab promises and to stress the need for dependence on Palestinian plans and initiatives to achieve Palestinian objectives. Though the PLO lost its base in Beirut, it emerged politically strenghtened, and intensified its efforts to follow the thorny path of a political settlement.

Two consecutive PNC meetings – the 16th in 1983 in Algiers and the 17th in 1984 in Amman – reaffirmed the peaceful intentions of the PLO and offered Israel a peace plan, a settlement in which neither party could claim complete victory, but in which both people could fulfil equally their right to self-determination.

An opportunity exists at the moment for both parties to the conflict to disrupt the plans of the maximalists on both sides which eventually would lead both people to self-destruction. An opportunity exists to break out of this vicious cycle of violence and to lead the region to peace and stability. The future of the area depends on the peace forces within both the Palestinian and Israeli camps to grasp the opportunity, nurture it, and lead it to its fruitful culmination – simultaneous mutual recognition.

The Palestinians have gone beyond offering a negotiated settlement. They have devised the mechanism, springing from the PLO-Jordanian accord of February 11, 1985, to achieve peace, stability and prosperity for all the peoples of the region, foremost among them the Palestinians and the Israelis. The opportunity is within our reach. The intention from the Palestinian side is to accentuate the need for peace. Israeli goals and intentions have to meet this peace offensive or the region will slide to war and a whole generation will be lost to eventually start from the point we are at at this moment. ■

Anti-Terror Law Proves Israel Won't Talk Peace



by Kate Rouhana

After years of complaining "there's no one to talk to," the Israeli Knesset passed on first reading a law outlawing individual Israeli contacts with representatives or members of "terrorist" organisations. The organisation the Israeli legislators had in mind was the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

The new "anti-terror bill," as it has been dubbed, is intended to tell the world that Israel will not negotiate with the PLO on any terms. The tool chosen to convey this message, however, has a myriad of grave drawbacks. It violates the basic civil rights that form the cornerstone of democracy. It forestalls a non-existent danger. It is almost impossible to enforce. It will place Israelis the world over in very awkward situations, and it closes off the only available channel of contact between the PLO and Israel.

The bill, which must be approved in the Knesset three times to become law, makes it a criminal offence punishable by three years in jail for Israeli citizens to meet with representatives or members of "terrorist organisations." There are four exemptions from the law: immediate blood relatives of the "terrorists," next of kin of Israelis held captive by the organisations in question, journalists at news conferences and participants in international academic symposiums — "provided," according to *The Jerusalem Post*, "that they do not conduct private conversations with terrorists." (For "terrorist" read PLO members at any level, whether or not they have ever been involved in any kind of bloodshed.)

On its first reading, the bill passed by a large majority of the 36 MKs present. Only Mapam, the Citizens' Rights Movement (CRM) and the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality (DFPE) opposed the bill, together with lone mutineer Abd al-Wahab Darawshe (Labour) who voted against it despite his party's decision to vote in favour. Members of the Progressive List for Peace (PLP) cast their vote by going to Geneva to meet with PLO spokesperson Shafiq al-Hout.

The new "anti-terror bill," by determining to whom, where, and when a citizen may or may not speak, introduces a curb on absolute freedom of speech that has nothing to do with the security of the state. As such, it is unwarranted. It is not as if the bill calls for every case of meetings between such persons and Israeli citizens to be scrutinised, and, if it were determined that information which jeopardised security was exchanged, criminal charges be brought in selective instances. (That in itself would be inexecutable, but not a violation of free speech). No. Under the provisions of the law, if an Israeli asks Yasir Arafat "How are you?" or "How's the weather in Amman?" he will be charged with the same offence as another individual who passed war plans or military secrets to Arafat.

According to American constitutional law generally conceded by most to be quite democratic, if speech does not pose a "clear and present danger" to the welfare of the public, it cannot be suppressed. Most Israelis who seek talks with PLO officials do so in order to advance the cause of peace, which could not be further from presenting a "clear and present" — or any — danger to the state of Israel.

Indeed, the only "clear and present danger" one can possibly conceive the bill's authors had in mind was the danger that some day these unofficial contacts, which have been on the rise in the last few years, might create pressure among political circles to take the plunge and negotiate with the PLO. This would be anathema to the bill's Tehiya-Likud authors, who aren't even ready to talk to Jordan about *dividing* the West Bank.

Justice Minister Moshe Nissim said on Israel TV last week that one aim of the law is to prevent individuals from taking things into their own hands and making policy independently of the Foreign Minister. Yet even this supposed danger does not exist. Individual Israelis meeting with PLO officials can do nothing more than exchange views. They certainly cannot make policy; only the Foreign Ministry has the authority to make policy decisions.

Furthermore, such a law would be impossible to enforce. As it stands now, public Israeli figures who meet with PLO officials usually announce their intentions beforehand and make the matter public. This law will simply drive those who are determined to have contacts to do so surreptitiously, underground. The Israeli intelligence might be top-notch, but does it have the manpower to follow every Israeli who goes abroad to a country where PLO officials or members are residing or visiting?

The bill's loose reference to "terrorists" also leads one to wonder how these pariahs are to be precisely defined. Are they strictly top PLO officials, or also PLO/PNC members, or simply Palestinians who identify or sympathise with the PLO? If an Israeli meets with an official of any other "terrorist" organisation (including the Gush Emunim underground), will that be considered a crime too?

The Knesset bill "introduces a curb on absolute freedom of speech that has nothing to do with the security of the state."

The law will create a host of problems for Israelis who are in situations where PLO members are present or where they need to speak to them for professional purposes. Journalists will not be able to interview important West Bank Palestinians who are known PLO sympathisers or to cover Palestinian political gatherings such as Palestine National Council sessions. Academics at foreign universities where PLO members are on the staff will not be able to engage in informal intellectual talks to enhance their understanding of reactions to events and political attitudes. Israel's UN representative will not be able to talk to the PLO observer, should he ever need to do so. Israelis at international conferences like that in Nairobi two months ago will not be able to chat or barter with their Palestinian counterparts. Israeli scholars participating in forums, conferences, workshops and the like will not be able to speak to PLO members at the social gatherings that inevitably precede and follow such events (and are often an integral and important part of the formal proceedings). Students and scholars at conferences will not be able to direct questions to participants who are connected with the PLO. These examples are only a few out of a potentially long list; they require little imagination to conjure up, and they are eminently realistic situations that frequently arise.

THE NEW KNESSET BILL "CLOSES OFF THE ONLY AVAILABLE CHANNEL OF CONTACT BETWEEN THE PLO AND ISRAEL"

The only thing the "anti-terror bill" would achieve is to cut off the sole existing channel of contact with the PLO and thereby rule out the slim possibility that unconventional means of diplomacy might one day reap a breakthrough, however small, in the deadly *status quo*. It is self-evident that the conflict between the PLO and Israel is protracted and intractable and that normal diplomatic channels have so far not been successful. Hence these semi- and unofficial contacts are all important — not for determining policy, but for breaking the ice that will pave the way for policy change on both sides.

This, apparently, is precisely the aim of the law: to put an end to the rapidly rising number of visits, interviews, debates, workshops and meetings between Israelis and Palestinians. The timing of the law is not coincidental; it comes in the midst of an Israeli drive to delegitimise the PLO in world eyes and at home. This drive was launched in the wake of the new Palestinian peace initiatives and the interest they stirred up in American circles. As Justice Minister Nissim said on TV, "How can we demand that the US refrain from talking with the PLO if we don't stop our own citizens from doing so?"

Minister-Without-Portfolio Moshe Arens (Likud) said last week that the Knesset must aim at deligitimising the PLO "so that Israelis would not seem to be combating terror on the one hand, while at the same time seeing nothing wrong in talking to PLO members," according to *The Jerusalem Post*.

In addition to the legitimacy the PLO is gaining abroad, the Israeli government views with concern the emergence of an Arab-Jewish, non-communist, list which sees the Palestinian problem as the crux of the conflict, actively recruits PLO support, and bases its positions on Palestinian nationalist concerns. The next law the right-wing bloc has on its agenda is one which would bar any list that identifies with the PLO from running for the Knesset.

This multi-level legislative drive can be taken as an indicator of what Israel would actually do if the PLO declared readiness to negotiate with Israel. It shows clearly that the old excuse of "there's no one to talk to" on the Palestinian side was and remains merely an excuse. When put to the test, Israel backs off from unconditional negotiations with the PLO. The more the PLO wants to talk, the more Israel erects barriers.

Years ago, it used to be that Arabs at cocktail parties would not talk to or shake the hands of Israelis — any Israelis. Imagine this scenario: A PLO official at a party in the US bumps into an Israeli that he befriended several years ago. The Palestinian comes up to him full of enthusiasm and holds out his hand. The Israeli gives him a baleful look and turns away without a word. The Israelis, who used to run after any Arab who would speak to them, will have come round in a tragic full circle and imposed the speaking ban on themselves.

There is something symbolic and frightening in that. ■

Kate Rouhana is a member of Al Fajr's *editorial staff.*

In Interview

Nabil Sha'ath on the Amman Agreement

When the names of Palestinian delegates slated to meet with the American administration were made public, Dr Nabil Sha'ath, a close adviser to Yasir Arafat, was discovered to be on the list. Washington then refused Sha'ath after his political loyalty to Fatah was determined. Despite Washington's refusal, Sha'ath's name continues to be bantered about. Yet few have had the opportunity to publicly examine Sha'ath's position on matters of concern. Recently an interview with the Arafat adviser was published in the Arabic daily Al Quds. *Following is a translation of that interview.*

Q: How do you see the Jordanian-Palestinian accord now that it has been five months since its signing?

A: I see this accord as one part of the comprehensive move guided by the resolutions of the previous Arab summits, and by new directions which give the Palestinian struggle new momentum and motive. This comprehensive move should motivate an international move leading to an international conference to be attended by all concerned parties.

Q: But do you notice that it only increases the division in the Palestinian arena?

A: The Syrian regime and not the PLO created and fuelled the divisions and the various splits. So, it is wrong to say that every step which has any amount of independence from Syria means that those who carry it out are responsible for the splits. We have to see who has instigated this war against the PLO. We don't have to blame ourselves.

Q: During the camp wars, George Habash said that a retraction from the Jordanian-Palestinian accord is the correct approach to resume dialogue in the Palestinian arena. How do you feel about that?

A: The Jordanian-Palestinian agreement as any other agreement will continue or cease to be depending on various factors springing from the agreement itself. It is not a means of pressure or blackmail from any side. If Palestinians change their minds, it must be because the accord has failed to achieve its goals or the Palestinians think differently than the Jordanians.

The accord is not a means of dialogue with another side nor, as was said, a means of dialogue with the American administration. It is, as I have said, part of a move which we hope will be comprehensive in the Arab world and internationally. The move is based on the resolutions of the PNC [Palestinian National Council], the Arab summits, and on any explicit viewpoint which does not differ even slightly from the goal of the Palestinian struggle which is to liberate the land without any strategic compromises.

The accord is not meant as a dialogue with Palestinian factions. Jordan represents the longest border line with our people and our land and we need to formulate a relationship with Jordan. Then if the Popular Front wants to have a role in determining a relationship, it must come to the PLO and help us in limiting and improving the relationship but not to condition in advance its extermination.

Q: There are many accusations directed towards the accord. The first one is that the PLO is selling out by indirectly recognising Resolution 242. How do you feel about this?

A: The PLO rejects and it will continue to reject every 242 because it cannot be considered as either international political recognition of the PLO or any political action used to determine the addressing of the Palestinian issue because it does not deal at all with the issue or with the Palestinian people. It does not deal with the refugee issue because it does not ever name them explicitly — and Israel often said that who is intended here are the Israeli-Arabs. There is only one statement in 242 which should be stressed which is that it is not legal to occupy a land by force; that is to say, Israel has to withdraw from all the lands it has occupied in 1967.

If you mean implicit recognition of the resolutions of the UN and the International Security Council, then we will recognise those resolutions which confirm the Palestinians' right to determine their destiny and to establish the independent country which is not limited by borders. Resolutions 242 doesn't say the Palestinian land is in the occupied territory of 1967. Therefore, what we are concerned with, as Palestinians, are those resolutions which centre on the Palestinian issue, the Palestinian people and their land.

The problem is that America and Israel want to use Resolution 242 and make it the only way to deal with the Palestinian issue. But, we reject 242 totally because it does not relate to us.

"Our concept of a future Palestinian state has never been to have it independent from the Arab world."

Nabil Sha'ath

Q: The second accusation is that through the accord, the PLO abandons their most important achievement which is remaining the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people?

A: This also is not precise and not correct, otherwise the seven-member delegation which was formed according to the Fez Summit also is abandonment of the legitimacy and sole representation because the delegation continued after no one would receive it because it includes a representative from the PLO. So why is that not considered a substitute for Palestinian representation?

The strategic Syrian-Palestinian alliance said that the PLO should not take any decision unless Syria agrees. It prevents the PLO from attending the Amman Summit or to have dialogue with Europe. Isn't it also then claiming Palestinian representation?

As long as the PLO remains independent and separated in any delegation which consists of two members or seven members or ten members, it will not give up the fact that it is the sole representative of the Palestinian people and this delegation remains a part of the struggle. What is important is to maintain our independent decision in a partnership with any Arab nation.

Q: Does the accord lead to a separate agreement?

A: We reject individualism. Furthermore, we will not allow anybody to murder us or exterminate the PLO. However, we support any attempt of solidarity even if this attempt is limited and temporary.

An explanation of the accord to the Arab world is not the right way. The strategic Syrian-Palestinian accord was not exposed to the Arab world, nor was the Libyan-Morocco treaty or the Steadfastness and Confrontation Front.

The accord does not conflict with the Arab summit's resolutions and it is not individualistic, so it must receive comprehensive Arab support.

Q: The Soviets are reserved about the accord. They did not even welcome the joint committee. How do you feel about that?

A: Even with Syria which waged a war against us and contributed to our split, we have hope of a dialogue to enforce the strategic relations. We are also concerned about strengthening our friendship and alliance with the Soviets in a spirit of companionship and deep appreciation. We always explain each step. However, we do not give up our independence.

And I think that during the past few days we have come a long way in explaining to the Soviet comrades that our agreement doesn't mean unilateral action or throwing ourselves in the American lap or anything else which means a compromise on our belief in the Soviet role in solving the conflict through an international conference.

Q: King Hussein stated in Washington that the PLO has given up the idea of an independent Palestinian state. How do you see that statement?

A: Giving up anything can only be based on the text and spirit of the joint agreement. In reality, our concept of a future Palestinian state has never been to have it independent from the Arab world, or else it would become a new Israel. We have always refused Camp David because it separates a major Arab country — Egypt — from the rest of the Arab world. How much more would our objection be to having a separated mini Palestinian state with few resources. The independence we want is from Israel and the US, but not an independence from the Arab world. We want a state with relations with all Arab states. This was stated in the agreement. Confederation is a conscious action between two independent states — Palestine and Jordan. This is what King Hussein meant.

Q: There is a belief that the Jordanian-Palestinian agreement was reached in order to carry out a dialogue with the US. Do you believe that the US has changed its position?

A: We should not get lost on details. Our strategy is clear: that the US is the main enemy of the Palestinian people and the Arab nation. But the US is also one of the two major powers that has relations with all Arab regimes from Syria in the East to Morocco in the West, with Iraq and Algiers and don't forget Egypt. This is why we feel that any gain from this enemy in recognising us and our rights is an important victory. But we are not prepared to make any concession on our rights in return for this recognition.

If we obtain US recognition of our rights, we move ahead in our struggle to liberate our land and thus change the balance of forces. This balance occurred after the 1973 war, but unfortunately some of the Arab regimes, or all of them, deprived us of reaping the results of that war. And after the invasion of Lebanon in 1982 a number of Arab regimes are trying to deprive us of that.

Any dialogue with the US should be based on the same basis as the Vietnamese and the Nicaraguans used. Their attempts were based on the struggle to get the US government to recognise them while they worked on getting popular support in the US. All this is done with increased political and military struggle.

From this aspect we feel that the change in the US position, although small, towards the PLO after the Amman agreement is positive. The US used to refuse to even sit and talk to any Palestinian. But today they are stating that they will meet a Jordanian-Palestinian delegation, with some conditions. Although we reject their conditions, we still feel that they have advanced.

Q: Is what you are saying the basis of your dialogue with the US? And is this the position of the other delegation members?

A: I am a committed soldier and I have no other choice in the matter. I am not free to choose as I please. I am constrained by my principles and the cause of my people. I didn't choose to be on any delegation and am not ready to agree to any delegation not approved by the PLO's Executive Committee on Fatah's Central Council. ■

A healthy orange tree — a sight quickly disappearing from the Gaza Strip.

GAZA SERIES II

Gaza Agricultural Backbone Broken

by Sami al-Aboudi

Gazan Zuhdi Abu Sha'ban is sick of agriculture. Season after season, whether dependent on oranges or cucumbers, his profits continue to disappear. The 60-year-old farmer believes his losses directly result from deliberate Israeli policy aimed at undermining the economy of the Gaza Strip. This policy, say Gaza agriculture experts, includes the prohibition of exports, high taxation, and regulations bent on curtailing expansion and effective irrigation.

It is indeed a fact that the Gaza Strip economy, so dependent on agriculture, has been deteriorating for years. According to the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics in the Gaza Strip, the

The occupier's concern was to destroy the citrus trees as a prelude to destroying the Gaza economy.

Strip's agricultural output for the year beginning in October 1983 declined two percent. The citrus crop, 47 percent of agricultural produce and thus the backbone of Gazan farming declined three percent. Other fruits disappeared from the market at the rate of 13 percent. Only vegetables, not very profitable anyway because of export restrictions, have increased by seven percent.

Vegetables now represent 21 percent of Gazan crops with the remaining 32 percent divided between non-citrus fruits — dates, grapes, and strawberries — and grains.

Just as the tale of Gaza's agricultural depression is long and considerably involved, so the history of Israeli attempts to destroy Gazan farmers takes one back several years. Following the 1948 war and the birth of Israel, large especially rich areas of Gaza fell under Israeli rule. Out of 1,111,501 dunums considered the Gaza district by the British, only 364,800 dunums remained in Arab hands to be renamed the Gaza Strip. An annual report in 1980 by the Citrus Producers Association (CPA) said Arabs were left with 6450 dunums of citrus groves on the Palestinian coast after the war. A total of 131,000 dunums of orange groves alone were lost to Israel.

When calm was restored, Gazan farmers encouraged by the new Egyptian authorities embarked on a major land reclamation project. This included replacing sand piles with rich topsoil in areas like the A'mer project near Gaza City. The reclamation was so successful that by 1967 when Israel occupied the rest of Palestine, Gazans had nearly 75,000 dunums of orange, grapefruit, lemon and other assorted citrus trees. According to Hashem al-Shawwa, head of the local CPS, Gaza citrus was even a strong competitor with Israeli citrus in Western European markets before 1967.

Following the Israeli occupation, the Israeli authorities moved first to restrict and even prohibit Arab exports to Western Europe. "They simply refused to take our products for export," said al-Shawwa. With the Gaza Strip cut off from Egypt and the Suez Canal all trade routes were closed. Citrus growers were left at the mercy of Israel "who was never merciful," said al-Shawwa. At the same time, Israeli markets were sealed off to Gaza citrus. With nowhere else to turn, Arab producers contracted with Eastern European countries like Yugoslavia, East Germany and Rumania, to buy Gaza citrus. But often these markets were too limited, and at times the countries were unable to pay in hard currency, choosing instead to exchange goods.

The Israelis intended to do more than prevent Arab citrus from competing in the marketplace. The Israelis viewed the citrus trees as a symbol of Palestinian steadfastness. As one Palestinian journalist from Rafah in the Strip recently said, "You might lack a title for your land, because it was never officially surveyed; but if there are trees on it, ownership can never be disputed." The occupier's concern was, thus, to destroy the citrus trees as a prelude to destroying the Gaza economy, said Ghazi Abu Salim of Deir al-Balah. Abu Salim, who heads a local cooperative for producing and marketing vegetables in the Gaza Strip, insists the Israelis prepared detailed plans to undermine citrus farming in the Strip, but people remained unaware until much later. The Israelis put themselves forward as being interested in improving agriculture in the Strip, said Abu Salim. As early as 1970, the authorities, through agricultural offices in the Strip, began to encourage farmers to make the switch to vegetables.

Vegetable farming in the Strip then constituted a minor portion of the Gazan economy. No more than 18,000 dunums were designated for vegetables, all of which were marketed locally. Abu Salim recalls that the director of the local Israeli agriculture office, Yitzhak Sharir, used to visit farmers and tell them Israel was willing to market Gazan-grown vegetables in Western Europe and in Israel itself. "They even began distributing hot houses and drip irrigation equipment free to farmers," Abu Salim said. To make their offer more convincing, the Israelis sponsored and encouraged the establishment of a vegetable marketing cooperative which worked closely with Agresko, the Israeli vegetable marketing society.

A vegetable patch on what was once a thriving citrus orchard.

By 1973, Palestinian vegetable farmers began selling their crops in Western Europe through Agresko and the Israeli-sponsored cooperative. During this period, the Israelis began introducing new kinds of vegetables to Gazan farmers, vegetables solely designed for export to European and Israeli markets such as celery. They even supplied farmers with seeds from the Israeli Agriculture Department.

Early revenues reaped by vegetable growers encouraged more citrus farmers to uproot their trees and plant vegetables. Zuhdi Abu Sha'ban was among the first to experiment with vegetable growing. He said he uprooted six dunums of his orchard in the early 1970s and converted them to a vegetable patch. "It proved to be a success, and we made good profits," he said. In 1975, as a result of increasing vegetable profits and growing difficulties with citrus production and marketing, Abu Sha'ban and many other Gazans decided to make further conversions in their farms. He uprooted 10 more dunums. Abu Sha'ban said he let the land rest for five years, then fertilised the field. He then installed drip irrigation equipment and hot houses, making it a model vegetable farm. "I spent more than JD3000," he said.

Abu Sha'ban's experiment was not unique. Between 1973 and 1979, Gazans uprooted more than 25,000 dunums of citrus orchards, converting them to vegetable farms. According to Abu Salim, vegetable plots rose from 18,000 dunums in 1968 to nearly 67,000 dunums today. Yet by the time Abu Sha'ban's farm began yeilding crops, the Israelis had reduced the amount taken to market. Abu Salim said they first refused tomatoes, cucumber, cantilopes and celery, for no reason. "The Israeli authorities' decision shocked the farmers. Farmers didn't know what to do with their crops," he said. Great losses were thus sustained, where crops either rotted on the vine or were sold at a loss in the local markets. Abu Sha'ban was among those devastated by the market closure. "I lost the entire JD3000 that season," he said. One of his friends told *Al Fajr* Abu Sha'ban requested financial help for the first time from his sons in the Arab gulf.

During the years that followed, there were further reductions in the amount and kinds of crops Israel was ready to market. Today, the Israeli cooperative Agresko markets only zucchini and eggplants.

Gaza farmers charge that the same tactic was used with apple growers in the northern Gaza Strip, particularly in the Beit Lahia area. The Israelis introduced strawberries in the early 1970s to Gaza farmers and, of course, took it upon themselves to market the crop. Farmers were thus encouraged to replace their apple orchards with strawberry plants. Today there are nearly 600 dunums yielding an annual strawberry crop of nearly 600 tons. Yet, farmers report the Israelis have again notified farmers that only 250 tons will go to market.

In addition to the limitations on the Israeli market, problems have also arisen with Eastern Europe. Agricultural engineer Munther al-Rayes, who also owns a citrus orchard, said Eastern European countries prefer to exchange citrus for another commodity. This, however, creates problems with Israeli authorities. During the last season, for instance, Israelis attempted to disrupt a deal exchanging citrus for Yugoslavian sheep. They demanded first that a local veterinarian go to Yugoslavia and inspect the sheep. They then restricted the locations where the sheep could be to very few and finally ordered the sheep be slaughtered before being sold.

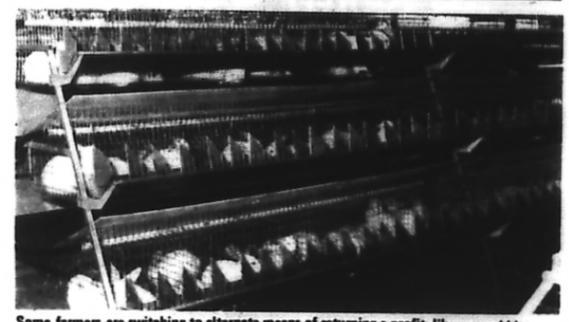
Exports to the Arab world from Gaza are also not without their fair share of difficulties. Gaza farmers say shipping produce through the only avenue out — the bridges across the river to Jordan — is very costly. They also complain that Gazan citrus is not given any preference over other world production. CPA Head Hashem al-Shawwa said the Arab states have never adopted a coherent policy to buy Gaza citrus and distribute it among themselves to help bolster steadfastness. "They treat our oranges like those from South Africa or Cyprus," he said bitterly. Shawwa also directed severe criticism at the joint Palestinian-Jordanian Committee for "failing to sponsor citrus producers, and help them fight for survival."

In recent years, Palestinian farmers have come to the realisation that the Israeli government intends to undermine the Gazan economy through all available means. The authorities have resorted to outright restrictions and harassment measures to curtail agriculture. One of the earliest such restrictions involved limiting the amount of water Arab farmers used for irrigation. Al-Rayes said the Israeli authorities issued a regulation in 1977 restricting farmers to 800 cubic metres of water per dunum per year. Farmers were then obliged to instal meters at artesian wells used for irrigation to record water consumption. Violations were then subject to heavy fines. Al-Rayes said the amount of water allowed is barely sufficient to keep the trees alive, much less assist in attaining a high yield. After repeated appeals from citrus growers and the CPS, the Israelis finally agreed to raise the allotted amount to 1000 cubic metres.

Gaza Citrus: 1973 – present

Year	Tonnage output in (thousands)	Percent exported to Eastern Europe	Percent sold locally
1973/1974	196.6	22	10
1974/1975	191.5		
1975/1976	237.1	26	5
1976/1977	227	20.3	8
1977/1978	176.5	24	1.5
1978/1979	183	23.5	3
1979/1980	162	25.6	5
1980/1981	168.5	13	5.5
1981/1982	185.4	15	5
1982/1983	153	26	12
1983/1984	146	11.6	12
1984/1985	161.9	10.4	20.6

Source: Updated 1983 Annual Report of the Citrus Producers Assocation in the Gaza Strip.



Some farmers are switching to alternate means of returning a profit, like new rabbit farms.

Farmers, however, soon found themselves subject to a new ordinance barring them from planting new trees or replacing dying ones without an official permit. Farmers complain such permission is rarely granted, with the vast amount of citrus orchards uprooted between 1970 and 1979, the order is clearly designed to reduce Gaza citrus to a bare minimum. CPS statistics for 1983 show the citrus crop dropped from 237.1 thousand tons in 1976 to 161 thousand tons in 1984. Production was anticipated, however, to top 300,000 tons. Hashem al-Shawwa said the decline in citrus production translates literally into a drop in local revenues. He said the restriction on new plantings is perhaps the most severe restriction against Gaza's agriculture.

Yet the tale continues. To add to Palestinian suffering, the Israeli authorities began in 1983 collecting from farmers income tax and the Value Added Tax (VAT) which is 15 percent the value of marketed goods. Abu Salim, head of the Vegetables Cooperative, said no other country in the world subjects its farmers to taxation. "In most countries, including Israel, farmers get government subsidies to help them cope with the fluctuating seasons and in repatriation for their losses," he said. Abu Salim pointed out that even Agresko used to deduct five percent of sales for a "Losses Fund," but Arab farmers never received aid from the cooperative when they suffered losses.

To top it all off, Palestinian farmers in Gaza complain of increasing competition from Jewish settlements which flourished in the Gaza Strip after 1980. Settlers dump their subsidised crops in the Gaza retail markets at a reduced price, forcing farmers to sell even lower, often at a loss. Abu Salim charged that, thus, Israeli settlements pose a serious threat not only to the political integrity of the Gaza Strip, but also to the local economy. He said settlers now grow *Malouk hiyeh*, a kind of vegetable they do not eat, in order to sell to Gaza Arabs. Lacking outside support, Palestinians in the Gaza Strip have begun instigating self-help programmes. The Gazan Bank of Palestine, the only Arab bank operating in the occupied territories, now provides low interest loans to farmers at the rate of 12 percent. Though still more funds are needed, farmers were able to improve their production last year by nearly 15,000 tons, according to al-Shawwa, who is also chairman of the Board at the bank.

The Gaza CPA is also sponsoring development projects like a nursery, and sheep and rabbit farm. Shawwa said the projects are specifically designed to provide jobs for unemployed agricultural engineers.

The self-help attempts have gone a long way to encourage Gazan farmers.

Al-Shawwa maintains that the self-help attempts — though still too little and far too late — have gone a long way to encourage Gazan farmers. "I would really like to give a special salute to our farmers for their steadfastness,' said al-Shawwa. "They have struggled and maintained their land without any financial support from anybody abroad." Of course, it would have been a lot easier to give up. Yet farmers like Zuhdi Abu Sha'ban don't seem about to. Though his orange groves are mostly gone and his vegetable yield restricted, Abu Sha'ban continues to farm his 16 dunums where a few groves of olive trees remain. ■

Gaza farmers battle back with nurseries full of new citrus seedlings.

Children of Annexation

A few weeks ago, there was a cartoon on the editorial page of Davar *showing two schoolchildren, one Jewish, the other Arab, standing on the opposite side of a tennis court, rackets poised for play. But in place of a net, between them loomed a brick wall.*

The prevalence of anti-democratic and racist attitudes among Israeli youth has received a good deal of attention in the Israeli press over the past year. Aside from many polls, surveys and whatnot, there has been a steady stream of articles on the order of "The Youth of Today," "Today's Youth," and "The Next Generation of Soldiers" — "youth" in Israel being synonymous with pre-draft age.

The two articles presented below reveal something of the parameters of the current debate: on one hand, you have REVELATION — the recognition that children are influenced by their surroundings; on the other hand, you have a Dr Frankenstein approach: "We've created a monster."

• • •

Before turning to the articles, a short historical anecdote seems appropriate. In the middle sixties, before the 1967 war, an Israeli sociologist by the name of Georges Tamarin carried out a study on 4th grade pupils. He gave one set of pupils the biblical account of Joshua's conquest of a Canaanite city, and he gave a different set of pupils the same story against a Chinese setting and with Chinese protaganists.

When asked to morally reckon Joshua's or his Chinese equivalent's bloody and even barbaric conquest of the city, Joshua came out with almost double the moral backing of his alter-ego.

Tamarin, at the time a radical secularist, used his findings to attack the unenlightened instruction of the Bible in the Israeli school system. Tamarin urged the liberalisation of both schools and consciousness. Because of that, he was fired from a Ministry of Education job a few years later — **Translator.**

The Dark Side of the Moon

An Arabic teacher at a Tel Aviv comprehensive school gave 200 eighth grade pupils an assignment at the end of the year in order to get an idea about what they knew and how they felt about the Arabs. The pupils were also asked to describe real or imaginary encounters with Arabs, so that "even if they had never met Arabs, they could imagine such an encounter and thus consider the issue more closely."

According to the teacher, the assignments were tough reading. On September 20, she published a selection of them in the *HaAretz Friday Supplement*. They are not meant to furnish statistical proof for a given thesis, but rather, to provide an insight into the belief systems which have filtered down to the young. Following is a selection of some of the feelings she elicited:

"H. — described as one of the brightest pupils in her grade, writes about how she feels: 'When I hear the word Arab I get mad. Mad at the people who sympathise with them and at the Arabs themselves. In spite of all the harm and the problems they've caused us, they're still clamouring for what they call 'equal rights'.

"S. — described as an excellent pupil. What does he feel? 'I feel that I want to kill them all and I don't care about a single one of them. But when I see them fighting for us and I see the injured on television, then I take pity on them. But that doesn't happen often. Right now, I want to kill all of them, not because they're Arabs but because they kill Jews... There are also good Arabs that I like, like Arab doctors who don't take money from patients.'

"Why does S. like Arab doctors? It turns out that he's met some. 'When my sister and I needed dental treatment, my parents took us to an Arab village where there was an Arab doctor. When we got there, he treated us and I asked him how he was in Hebrew, since he knew Hebrew... After getting treatment my father wanted to pay but the doctor didn't want to accept any money. Finally, my father convinced him. The second time, the doctor didn't want to accept money because my father had forgotten his wallet and the doctor said that even if he had a wallet he wouldn't accept any money.

"T. writes: '[The Arabs] are multiplying and they will continue to do so if we don't stop them. The only good Arabs are doing the state of Israel is in regard to work: they do dirty work and get relatively low wages. As regards the harm [they're causing] Israel has a lot of problems because of the Arabs, such as, rapists, demonstrations, stone throwing, bombs and more... All the smuggling in the country is carried out by Arabs in my opinion. My father has an Arab worker who once told me about groups of Arabs that travel to Syria and bring back drugs and all sorts of other things. It harms the situation in the country and crime is getting worse because of the Arabs and because they're allowed to walk around free.

"L: 'I don't even pity them, even if they're in refugee camps. I think they brought it all on themselves because of what they've done to us. And I don't care if they're killed. Actually, it would make me happy. The Arabs are garbage.'

"The same pupil described the following imaginary encounter with an Arab man: 'I was driving in my car by myself when I saw an Arab who was asking for a lift. I told him to get in and kept on driving. I was passing some houses when I suddenly felt him moving towards me. He tried to rape me, but I yelled 'rape' and everybody came out of the houses and the men caught him and took him to the police.' " (*HaAretz Friday Supplement*, September 20, 1985).

"When I hear the word Arab I get mad. Mad at the people who sympathise with them and at the Arabs themselves."

"When D. hears the word Arabs, she gets 'the creeps and not just because they're primitive and they're trying to harm us all the time by planting bombs in Jerusalem... Whenever an Arab sees a Jewish woman, he immediately looks at her legs and whistles... Jewish men never start up with Arab women — they don't whistle at them and they don't rape them. Why should Arabs and Jews have the same rights? Do we have to fight so that they can live here? They have their country. They shouldn't, live in our country. We don't go invading their country.' *D. concludes:* 'I'm in favour of racism because the killers of our people should not be allowed to live together with us in our country.

"Commenting on the media portrayal of Arabs, B. says: 'The media always show [a lot of] bad things and few good things about the Arabs.' This attitude is echoed by many of the other pupils who claim that they learned 'bad things' about the Arabs from media reports about murders and rapes.

"Z. is a welcome change: 'When I hear the word Arabs I immediately start thinking about the good Arabs who don't cause harm, about the Arabs who are people like us... The Arab residents in my opinion are no different than the Jewish residents. The hatred against them springs from prejudice and because they're not members of our religion but rather follow a different religion and different customs. If the Arabs had the opportunity to learn more and become educated I think they could accomplish much more and be employed in top professions (like doctors and lawyers). But they'll run up against the prejudice of the Jews... In my opinion, the fact that they belong to a different religion and nationality doesn't necessarily mean that their mothers don't take care of them the way Jewish mothers take care of their kids. I won't deny that sometimes Arabs frighten me, but I don't hate them.

Growing Up Fascist

The numbers speak for themselves. The public opinion surveys among young people have raised questions and painted a picture — with digits and percentage marks — that cannot but make one anxious. Between 30-40 percent of the youth support Kahane. Many of them are not interested in democracy. Their basic human values have become distorted and perverted. The following is an excerpt from an article by Amnon Denkner published in *Davar*.

"People who regularly lecture in high schools are coming back shocked and full of despair; their words go unheard and what they hear from the pupils is repulsive: expel the Arabs, down to the last one; democracy has got out of hand. Of course, it's ludicrous to blame the young people... Israeli youth is what we make of it; it reflects our actions and failures and can serve as a charge sheet against us. For these young people were born into an experience that we created, they were educated within a system we set up and they have drawn their values and outlooks from their homes and communities, where adults establish what goes and what doesn't."

Denkner goes on to speak about the double message of the Israeli government *vis-a-vis* the occupied territories, which he takes to be cardinal in creating a desire among young people for simple and direct answers.

"The territories are being kept by us as a deposit for peace, but until that day comes, we'll settle them, strike roots, and build homes. Peace is one of the greatest aspirations and we're willing to sacrifice everything for it, but we won't put our security in jeopardy. We won't hand the territories back to the Arabs and simply give them the chance to destroy us again.

"The above variety of double-talk fits in well with the entire system of double messages throughout other walks of life which reflect an inherent crisis of values going on in the state and in the secular Zionist movement.

"The realities on the ground," writes Denker, "are of annexation, occupation and oppression, and it all revolves around the Arabs... Following 1967, curiosity about the Arabs did not take root in Israeli society, nor the desire to meet them, nor learn about their ways and culture. Within the experience generated by annexation, the Arabs have come to be seen to be worthy of hatred and contempt. Hatred, because they reject our right to the country and have sown a murderous brand of terrorism in our midst; contempt, because they are our [menial labourers] — candidates for any job that is dirty and menial.

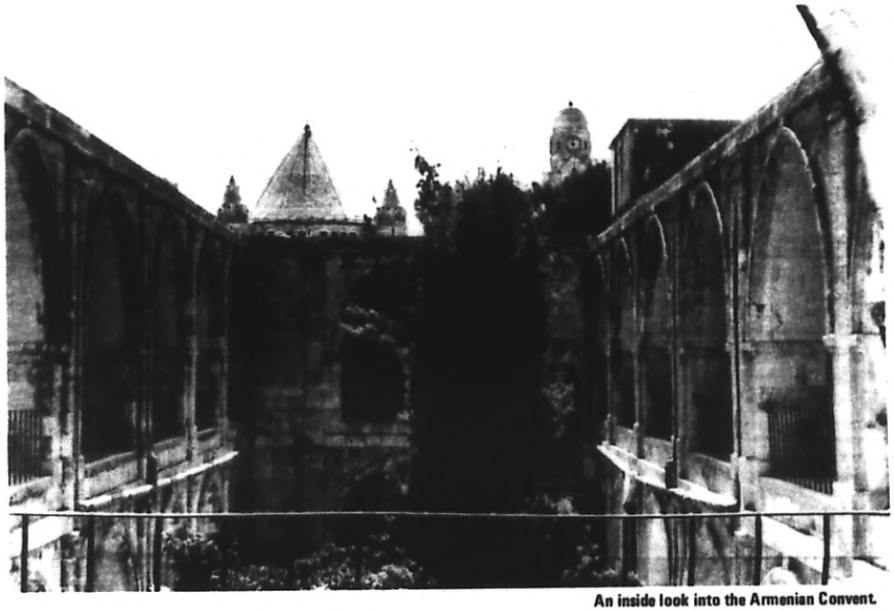
"The terrorist operations of the PLO and their dehumanisation by Israel have added oil to the fire of this hatred. The PLO is seen as a gang of murderers out to kill women and children... and since all the Palestinians are PLO supporters, they all bear the stigma..."

Denkner accuses the schools of being breeding grounds for ignorance — the natural soil of racist and anti-democratic values. He also displays acute perception in placing the present Israeli youth culture in perspective as regards its ability to assimilate fascist values.

"In contrast to the traditional image of the right in Israel, Western Europe and the USA, as a political conglomeration embracing chauvinistic world views, conservatism and the rejection of permissiveness, a significant portion of our young right-wingers display a type of behaviour that is far from conservative... One does not have to be religious to support Kahane and one doesn't have to be celibate to follow Rafael Eitan. You can dance on the grass to the music of Boy George with a Kahane tee shirt or get drunk and 'make-out' while wearing a Tehiya sweatshirt. The classic right, the puritanic right is too restrictive to draw masses of young people. The new extreme right doesn't demand that its followers stick to a rigid personal code, save in regard to the ban on marrying Arabs. The main thing is to love power and hate the Arabs... and to do that, one doesn't have to get a crew cut or take off one's faded jeans."

Denkner concludes his article by pointing out that strange as it may seem rather than motivate army recruits, the right-wing trend among Israeli youth has done just the opposite, for it has created a mindset in which people simply don't care. Although the situation may be ameliorated by making drastic changes in the education provided to young people, he argues, the crux of the problem lies in the political situation. (Amnon Denkner, *Davar*, September 15, 1985). ■

Armenian Museum Offers Unique Glimpse Into Community's History



An inside look into the Armenian Convent.

by Irene Ertugrul

One of the most pleasant areas of Jerusalem — and certainly the most peaceful — is the Armenian quarter. Spread out over one-sixth of the old city, the compound's dignified, ancient buildings, frequented squares and carefully-tended greenery provide a refuge not only for the quarter's inhabitants but also for the weary tourist.

The compound is not a public thoroughfare, but access to its tranquil atmosphere can be had by visiting the attractive museum that was established within it less than a decade ago. Entering through the Jaffa Gate, one follows the Street of the Armenian Patriarchate until one reaches a small door labeled "Armenian Museum." Having traversed the compound's thick walls, one immediately encounters a stately building that somehow has the air of being older than it is.

The building, which now houses the museum, was completed in 1843 to serve as a dormitory for the then newly-established seminary. Before that time students had been trained "at the feet of" learned monks. In 1975, however, a spacious modern complex was provided for the seminarians and their former living quarters were abandoned. (Adjacent to the old dormitory stands a structure built in the form of a church, which in former days served as classroom area for the students. Now it is empty and may eventually also be converted into a museum).

The old seminary hostel is two stories high and onto its central courtyard face what were once private rooms and dormitory accommodations. (The student body ranged from age 12 to 22 and it was the older boys who were allotted the individual rooms). In converting the building to a museum, partitions between the rooms were torn down and individual exits to the courtyard were blocked off. And now the old vaulted ceilings and arched passages that separated the rooms provide the museum's displays with an intimate setting, one that has a distinct personality of its own.

The ground floor of the museum is devoted to a survey of Armenian history and culture. The exhibition starts off with maps and photographs which chart the changing fortunes of the kingdom. At its peak, under King Tigranes the Great (95-55BC), it stretched from the Caspian to the Mediterranean and southward over the Taurus Mountains to Mesopotamia, Syria and Palestine.

Armenian links with Palestine continued under the Romans, as Armenians came to the region not only as traders and artisans but as legionaries and administrators. When in 301 Armenia became the first Christian state, its bonds with the Holy Land were further enforced. Pilgrims flocked in a constant stream throughout the year to venerate the sacred sites. By the 5th century there were 70 Armenian monasteries and churches in Palestine, although many of them have not survived.

The pilgrims who came invariably brought a gift to leave with the Patriarchate. On the upper storey of the museum, many of these offerings are displayed, although the most precious items, in gold and silver, are held in the Patriarchate's treasury. The other category of gifts of great value — illuminated manuscripts — form part of the compound's store of manuscripts. Now numbering 4000, the Patriarchate's manuscript collection is made up of donations from pilgrims, copies made by local scribes of various key documents and, of great importance, holdings of Armenian libraries abroad which were salvaged from wartorn areas and brought to Jerusalem for safekeeping.

A tantalising sampling of the rare and costly gifts the Patriarchate has received from pilgrims forms part of the museum's display. Thus, one can see priestly crowns and embroidered vestments, elaborately-worked objects destined for use during church services, fine ceramics and a few of the illuminated manuscripts. Present in very great number, however, are the copper plates, bowls, coffee pots and ewers that were the most common type of gift. Each is inscribed with the name of the donor and the date of his pilgrimage — largely the 18th and 19th centuries. Copper was easily transportable and such a gift was within everyone's financial capacity. The most modest item in the collection is perhaps the copper cup that was presented by two fishermen who had come to Jerusalem from Anatolia.

Also on the second floor, stands Jerusalem's first printing press which was put into operation by the Armenian community in 1833. Near the press are displayed some of the range of books it produced as well as its old printing blocks. The Armenians were responsible for still another innovation in the city's cultural development — the introduction of a photographic workshop. In 1860, Patriarch Essayi, whose hobby was photography, organised the training of seminarians and other students in photography and one of his students, Krikorian, went on to open Jerusalem's first photographic studio in 1875. A photo portrait of this dynamic Patriarch and some of the first pictures taken by his students form part of the display.

Standing in the courtyard are other objects of interest: huge cauldrons that were utilised for preparing food for a crowd of pilgrims, old, finely-engraved tombstones and a decorated door that dates back to the 13th century. The museum is indeed not only aesthetically pleasing, but of great interest. Unfortunately, as is the case with so many other museums in the world, most of the displays are only scantily labeled. Although, in the historical section that occupies the ground floor, there are texts on the wall that try to pull together contents of the room, the individual photographs and objects are left without any explanation of their significance. Perhaps someday soon this will be remedied.

The museum is open from 10 to 5 every day except Sunday, but the best time to visit is in the afternoon. Within the compound stands the sumptuous Cathedral of St. James, an excellent example of medieval Armenian architecture whose interior is replete with fine examples of Armenian art. Considered in Christian tradition as one of the five principal sites of pilgrimage in Jerusalem, the Cathedral is the repository of the head of St. James, the first martyr among the Apostles, and it is also the burial place of St. James the Lesser, brother of Jesus and the first Bishop of Jerusalem. Services at the Cathedral are held every day between 3:00 and 3:30, and thus a visit to this important religious site can be combined with a leisurely inspection of the Armenian community's museum.

Irene Ertugrul is an American freelance journalist specialising in Middle East affairs. She spent some time in the West Bank this summer.

One of the models of Armenian churches on exhibit in the museum.

The Martyr of Arab Opposition

An-Nashrah is a weekly Arab magazine published in Athens since September 1984. The editor of the publication was a Syrian youth named Michael Nimri. This 30-page magazine found its way into all Arab capitals and into the diaspora as a forum for Arab opposition. It has been the first such magazine of opposition away from the Arab regimes and their restrictions. For this reason Michael Nimri paid his life. He was assassinated in Athens. The shots that killed Nimri proved that the opposition in Arab regimes is still prohibited. We strongly condemn the killing of Nimri.

AL FAJR
September 19

The Killing of a Journalist

Michael Nimri was an ordinary Arab journalist with no militia or force. He had only his pen, paper and ideas to publish a magazine that was barely known by Arab-speaking people. These 'qualifications' are enough though to provoke the too sensitive Arab regimes which cannot tolerate freedom of expression. That is why Nimri paid his life in Athens. The accusing finger points to the Syrian regime which has killed many Arab and Syrian journalists before for the same reason, ie, opposing the regime. Therefore Nimri is not the first and it seems he will not be the last to be killed for free expression.

AL SHA'AB
September 19

Thatcher's Visit to Amman

Thatcher's visit to Amman and Cairo indicate that Britain intends to play a greater role in the area, concerning the peace efforts to solve the Palestinian problem. Observers got this impression not only from the visits but also from the arms deals to Saudi Arabia. It is well-known in international relations that arms deals are used as a means of pressure. As soon as the arms deal with Saudi Arabia was declared, Israel protested. In contrast, the US Congress rejection to approve arms sales to Jordan and Saudi Arabia means that Washington is not ready to practise pressure on Israel. These indications mean that there might be a change in British policy toward the Palestinian cause. But such a change is not guaranteed because of the dependence of British policy on American attempts to exclude the PLO from peace negotiations. Yet Thatcher was not so strict as the American administration. She called for choosing Palestinian members to a joint delegation who are not prominent in the PLO and who do not advocate terror. It is not clear yet whether Thatcher's visit will have any results. Could it be considered as an effort in the series of European efforts and initiatives?

AL QUDS
September 19

Will There Be a New European Initiative

The new developments in the area cannot be explained separately. They should be placed in a common context that helps us to draw the significance of all the events. Thatcher is currently visiting Jordan following her visit to Egypt. Prior to Thatcher's visit, King Hussein was in Cairo. Later Yasir Arafat stopped in Cairo where he met with Usama al-Baz, the political adviser to the Egyptian president.

Cairo then became the centre of Palestinian, Arab and international activity for peace and the starting point for next moves. The question that arises is: will there be a European initiative with the implicit encouragement of the US? The question becomes more important in view of the fact that the US administration gave the green light to the arms deal between Saudi Arabia and Britain. The Egyptian president's visit to Europe strengthens the speculations about a European initiative which will be within the context of American policy toward the Palestinian cause. Our only comment is that the Palestinian people welcome any initiative that makes possible the solution of the problem and recognises the rights of the Palestinians. The Venice declaration of 1980 is undoubtedly a suitable starting point for any initiative.

AL QUDS
September 20

New Role for the British Policy

Thatcher's visit to Jordan is the first by any British prime minister. Thatcher also paid a visit to the Palestinian refugee camp at al-Baqa'a to have a firsthand look at the life of the refugees. She emphasised the need to find a solution to the ME problem as soon as possible. In her press conference, she declared that the British Foreign Minister will receive a joint delegation comprising two members of the PLO executive committee. This statement indicates that Britain will follow a more even-handed policy than the US. We wonder how serious the statement of the British Prime Minister is. And we demand the Iron lady give substance to her statements. The Jordanian-Palestinian agreement was a step in the right direction that opened the door to a political move to solve the problem. Why shouldn't Britain shoulder its responsibility and contribute to advancing this move?

AL FAJR
September 21

The British Step!

Thatcher's decision to have her foreign minister meet with a joint delegation is a step on the right path and a significant development in the march toward a solution to the ME problem. Nevertheless, the British position has still not gone far enough. The British Prime Minister still rejects the idea of an International Conference. She still classifies PLO members as moderates and extremists and she demands the Palestinians recognise 242 which considers the Palestinian problem a refugee problem.

Will the British decision to meet a joint delegation reflect future developments? Did Thatcher have in mind, when she took the decision, to be a model for the US? Does this mean that the British position has moved away from the sphere of US influence? We must wait to see official US response to the British decision. The success of Thatcher's visit to Jordan is twofold. It indicates a relative improvement on the British political stand toward peace efforts. And it is a breakthrough toward a US political decision. There are certainly two balls now: one in the American court, and the other in the European one. The coming days will prove how serious they are in their interest for a peaceful solution.

AL QUDS
September 21

The Israeli Government and the 'Crisis'

Shimon Peres and Shamir quickly contained the crisis that threatened the unity government. But this does not mean that their partnership is strong enough to stand tests other than Taba. It is quite clear that the two leaders do not want to dissolve the present government. The talk about the possible collapse of the government should not lead us to draw any political conclusions. Recent events proved that there is no substantial difference between the two Israeli major parties. In view of the vast American aid and the Arab state of division, Israel will continue to escalate its practices and show more obstinacy.

AL SHA'AB
September 23

The Gulf War Enters its Sixth Year !

The gulf war started its sixth year without any hope for ending it between these two Islamic states. The hostilities between these two neighbouring states date back to the 1920s when parts of Iraq were annexed to Iran. But after the Iranian revolution, there was supposed to be reconciliation and understanding. But Iran's dream of exporting the revolution to Iraq shattered all hopes and war broke out in 1980. All efforts to end this devastating war have failed so far. With the beginning of the sixth year the Arab and Islamic worlds should intensify their efforts to reconcile the two parties.

AL QUDS
September 23

Local Arabic papers published in Jerusalem focused this week on the army's continued provocation campaign.

All papers reported the shootings of Palestinian youths throughout the occupied territories. Humiliating acts forced upon Palestinians by Israeli soldiers also figured prominently in most papers.

Mrs Thatcher's surprise announcement in Jordan that the British Foreign Secretary would meet a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation also received top converage.

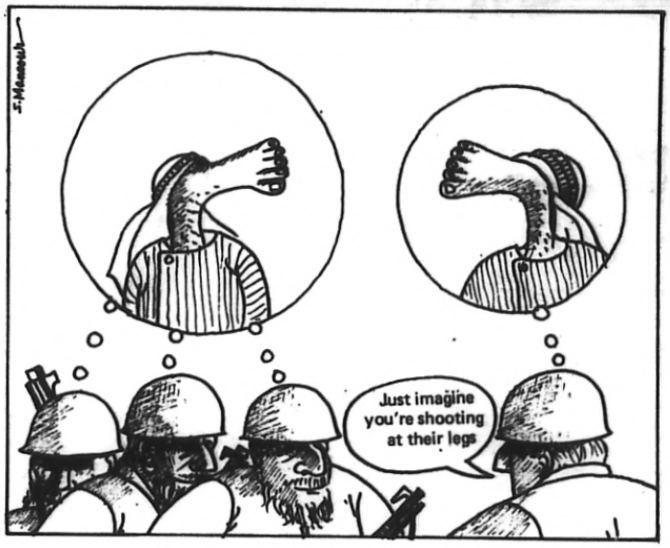
Fighting in Tripoli and the quake in Mexico were featured prominently.

Israeli Helicopter Shot Down in S. Lebanon

Katyusha rockets fell September 23 on the Upper Galilee causing damage to property, an Israeli army spokesperson said. The 107 mm rockets were reportedly the kind used by Palestinian guerrillas.

Israel Radio reported the next day that leaders of Jewish settlements in the border area urged Defence Minister Yitzhak Rabin to stop rocket attacks which have noticeably increased in the past few weeks. As a result, Israel delivered a stern warning to Lebanese villages outside the so-called 'security zone' to prevent firing of Katyushas from their areas.

Reports from south Lebanon said the Lebanese resistance destroyed an Israeli army helicopter September 21 as it was attempting to evacuate three Israeli soldiers injured by a land mine. The reports said the attack took place south of Tyre. Israeli reports later said the army totally destroyed the helicopter on the ground because it was not able to return to Israel. The attack on the aircraft came hours after Israeli soldiers encircled Zebqin village, about 43 kilometres south of Sidon and just outside the 'security zone.' The injured Israelis reportedly were searching for members in the Lebanese resistance.



See front page news story, editorial page 5

Asqalan Prison

Continued from page 1

The strikers, who were joined by a delegation from the Democratic Women's Movement in Israel and other progressive Israeli women's groups, issued a joint statement denouncing the attack on prisoners and calling for an end to such practices. The Tel Aviv-based Women Against Occupation sent a telegramme to the Israeli Minister of Police Haim Bar Lev saying they were horrified by the news that at least two prisoners were seriously wounded as a result of violence by the Asqalan prison authorities... "We protest the clubbing and use of teargas against the defenceless prisoners, and demand that the use of these methods stop immediately," the cable said.

In other related events, *Al Ittihad* reported September 22 that prisoners in Hebron prison are now subject to similar pressures, including reductions in the amount of food given to each prisoner. This is in addition to daily searches and continuing demands that the prisoners stand during the head count. The prison administration reportedly gave the prisoners a deadline to comply with the new procedures, but they refused to obey. The deadline, according to *Al Ittihad*, passed but there was no news about conditions inside.

In the central Nablus prison conditions are also deteriorating. Lawyer Jawad Boulus quoted prisoners as saying that food rations as well as food quality continues to diminish.

Abu Sharar's Home Demolished

Families of even assassinated PLO officials are now apparently targets of the military's 'iron fist.'

In what appears to be a rush order demolition from high-ranking Israeli officials, the Gaza home of Mohammed Abu Sharar and his 11 dependents was bulldozed to the ground September 19. Abu Sharar, 73, is the father of Majed Abu Sharar, a member of the PLO executive committee who was assassinated in Rome in 1981.

Gaza Strip's military governor, the military governor of Gaza City, several senior officers and more than 40 soldiers attended the demolition of the new two-storey home. Their surprising presence at the site proved the demolition order came from higher up, said Abu Sharar.

This was also proven, he said, by the fact that all normal legal means of appeal were closed to him. The house was demolished only five days after the order was issued, and only four days after Abu Sharar filed an appeal. According to Israeli military law, Palestinians can appeal military decisions affecting their livelihood within 30 days of the decision. Abu Sharar's appeal was ignored, however, and his home demolished well before the end of the 30 days.

Lawyer Abu Sharar, one time president of the Gaza central court, told *Al Fajr* he reminded Gaza's military governor of the military law concerning right to appeal. "I don't go by such laws," the governor told him.

The military has not yet given Abu Sharar and his family a reason for the demolition order. House demolitions are normally carried out in the occupied territories when a member of the household is suspected to have staged a guerrilla operation against an Israeli target. Abu Sharar told *Al Fajr* the demolition order must be meant as added punishment for his son Majed's political activity. "They meant it as a second punishment for Majed and for us, and as a precedent so others will not fight the *status quo*," he said.

Following the demolition, Abu Sharar filed another appeal with the military appeals committee demanding full compensation. He also sent letters of protest to Israeli government officials, the Red Cross, and the United Nations.

Abu Sharar's wife, Sharifa, told *Al Fajr* they had planned to move into the newly-constructed house in the coming few weeks. The house in which they now live is too small for their growing family, she said.

Sharifa said she personally contacted the military governor to appeal the decision. She was told her husband did not have a building permit for the new house. She told *Al Fajr* the Gaza municipality refused them a licence, but, like many Gaza residents, they went ahead with the construction. She said they expected to pay a small fine later.

Sharifa said at least six of her neighbours had obtained permits after building and had paid the fines. "Surely they singled us out because of our relation to Majed. Otherwise they would have warned us before we finished constructing a large and costly structure," she said.

Demolishing a house whose owners have no permit is the business of Gaza's municipality and not the military government, said Abu Sharar, who still practices law. The military can only demolish a house if its owners have carried out an attack on Israeli army or property, he said. "We have done nothing to deserve such punishment," he added.

Sources in the Gaza municipality told *Al Fajr* the demolition order was solely a military decision since the municipality licensing department was not consulted. The source added that the municipality has not issued a demolition order against non-licensed structures since 1967. Although the municipality can legally order such demolition, it has in the past resorted to imposing fines.

Shate' Wins Soccer Championship

Shate' Refugee Camp Championship Team.

by Samir Abu Jundi

For the first time since 1967, the Shate' Refugee Camp team has won two soccer championships — the Gaza Cup and the tournament championship.

More than 10,000 soccer fans stocked the Yarmouk playground in Gaza City September 21 to watch the final competition for the Gaza Strip Cup between the Shate' Services Centre team and the Gaza Athletics Club team.

The tough competition forced the game into overtime. Neither team scored in regulation play. They also failed to score in overtime. The Shate' camp team, however, scored four goals in additional penalty kicks, while the Gaza team scored only two. The trophy was then awarded to the Shate' team.

Support for Al Darb Continues

Israeli government plans to close *Al Darb* newspaper continued to result in expressions of condemnation from Arab, Israeli and foreign groups last week.

The Israeli Commissioner of Jerusalem, Rafael Levy, is studying the case, particularly Editor Dr Hanna Hallaq's denial of allegations the paper is funded by the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP).

Dr Hallaq received a solidarity message September 22 from the US Peace Council. The telegramme said the Peace Council has protested the closure move to the Israeli embassy in Washington. They said they also demanded the Israeli authorities reconsider their decision.

Earlier, the International Journalists Organisation in a similar message called on Israeli authorities not to close the paper. The organisation said such a step would be considered a serious breach of freedom of expression in the occupied territories.

Locally, a delegation from the monthly magazine *Al Katteb* visited the *Al Darb* office in East Jerusalem to express condemnation of the closure attempt. The five-month-old paper received a message of solidarity from the Arab Lawyers Union in the West Bank. The Greek Orthodox Community priest in Ramallah also sent a similar solidarity message to *Al Darb*.

Al Darb is still awaiting a final verdict from Levy's office which is scheduled to be given within the month.

Rabbi Meir Kahane needs a police escort after leaving a meeting of his anti-Arab Kach party September 22. Thousands of Israelis at an anti-racism rally nearby tauted him./AFP photo.

September 18, 1985

BALATA CURFEW LIFTED

Israeli military authorities lifted a curfew imposed on Balata refugee camp near Nablus two days ago after youths demonstrated to mark the 3rd anniversary of the Sabra and Shatila massacres.

QALQILYA YOUTH GETS 5 YEARS

An Israeli military court in Nablus sentenced Iyad Taher al-Aqra' of Qalqilya to 3 years imprisonment and 2 years suspended on charges of preparing fire bombs in 1983 and trying to buy a pistol to kill suspected collaborators.

FAMILIES WANT TO VISIT

Families of administrative detainees sent a memorandum to the International Committee of the Red Cross requesting permission to visit their sons.

4 YOUTHS JAILED FOR WEAPONS

Four youths from the Gaza Strip were sentenced to prison terms ranging from 6 months in prison to 2.5 years on charges of possessing weapons. The four were sentenced by an Israeli military court in Gaza. They are: Ilayan al-Nabahin — 2.5 years; Samir al-Nabahin — 6 months; Rizek al-Nabahin — 1 year; and Jihad Hassan Abu Hajar — 2 years.

September 19, 1985

3 AMA'RI YOUTHS SENTENCED

Three youths from Ama'ri refugee camp near Ramallah were sentenced to prison terms of up to 1 year on charges of throwing stones at Israeli soldiers. Israel Radio said the three, who were not identified, were detained in the camp. They were brought before a military court in Nablus for a summary trial. Two were sentenced to 1 year in jail and the third to 8 months in jail.

COURT POSTPONES DEPORTATION RULING

Israel's Supreme Court postponed its ruling into appeals by three West Bank residents against their planned deportation by military authorities until further notice. The court held a session to look into the appeals by Amin Maqboul, Bahjat al-Jayousi and Walid Nazzal.

2 TULKARM YOUTHS SENTENCED

An Israeli military court in Nablus sentenced Majdi Khaled Isma'il of Anabta in the Tulkarm area to 1.5 years in prison and a similar suspended sentence on charges of membership in a Palestinian organisation and weapons training. The court also sentenced Shafiq Mohammed Abu Khaled, of Habla village, to 2 years in prison and a similar suspended sentence on charges of planting a bomb at the entrance to Qalqilya, membership in a Palestinian organisation and attempting to buy weapons to kill a suspected collaborator.

September 20, 1985

LAND BROKER STABBED IN QALQILYA

Unidentified assailants stabbed a suspected land broker in Qalqilya and seriously wounded him. Faleh Shakkar, who is widely suspected of involvement in selling land to Israelis, was stabbed 4 times and taken to an Israeli hospital in Kfar Saba. Army troops and border police rushed to the area and blocked entrances to Shakkar's house. No arrests were reported.

YOUTH SENTENCED

An Israeli military court in Nablus sentenced Mohammed Mustafa Sawwan of Tulkarm to 1 year in prison and 2 years suspended on charges of membership in a Palestinian organisation, recruiting others and planning to assassinate suspected collaborators.

BALATA YOUTH GETS 2 YEARS

An Israeli military court in Nablus sentenced 19-year-old Amin Abdallah Khalil Abu Hamadeh, from Balata refugee camp, to 2 years in prison and 3 years suspended on security charges.

NAJAH STUDENT UNDER DETENTION

Israeli military authorities detained Abdallah Daoud, 24, who is a student at an-Najah University in Nablus and jailed him for 6 months without trial under administrative detention orders. Abdallah, a resident of Balata refugee camp, has been under town-arrest several times in the past.

September 22, 1985

GAZAN SHOT

An Israeli army patrol in Gaza opened fire on 18-year-old Jihad Khaled Hanouneh, wounding him in the shoulder and thigh. Military sources claimed the man ignored soldiers' orders to halt for a routine check.

CAR-BOMB IN JERUSALEM

A car-bomb was found and safely dismantled in West Jerusalem, Israel Radio reported. The car-bomb, which contained a number of gas cylinders connected to a time-bomb, was discovered in the Mea She'arim neighbourhood, home to most of Jerusalem's ultra-orthodox Jews.

BROTHERS GET 25 YEARS

Two brothers from Jabalya refugee camp in the Gaza Strip were sentenced to 25 years imprisonment by an Israeli military court in Lydda on security charges. Abd el-Hadi al-Najjar, 25, and Abd el-Hai al-Najjar, 23, were charged with planting three bombs in Israeli towns and membership in a Palestinian organisation.

WOMEN PICKET RED CROSS

Dozens of Palestinian women staged a sit-in strike at the Red Cross offices in East Jerusalem to protest Israel's "get-tough" policy against Arab citizens in the occupied territories.

GAZANS SENTENCED

An Israeli military court in Gaza sentenced Jamal Abu Hamdeh to 1.5 years in prison and 2 years suspended on charges of membership in a Palestinian organisation. The court also sentenced Mohammed Abed al-Haj, 21, to 15 months imprisonment and 2 years suspended and Mohammed Siam to 1 year in prison and 2 years suspended on identical charges.

September 23, 1985

WOMAN INJURED IN ACRE EXPLOSION

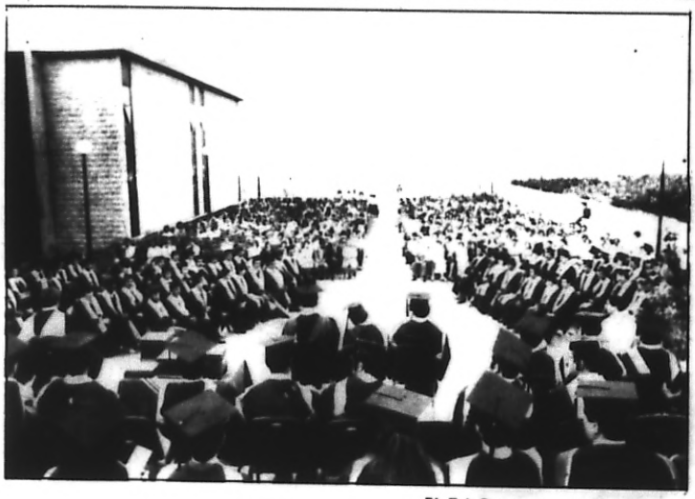
A bomb exploded on Ben Ami Street in Acre, wounding an Israeli woman and causing damage, Israel Radio said the bomb had been planted outside a cafe. A number of Arab passersby were held for questioning.

15 SHOPS SHUT IN JENIN

Israeli military authorities

Jewish synagogue (right) under construction next to the Daboiya building in Hebron. The Daboiya building was taken over by Jewish settlers in 1980./John Egan photo.

Palestinian and Israeli women outside Jerusalem's Red Cross office during a sit-in for Asqalan prisoners./AO photo.



Bir Zeit Commencement, September 19.

ordered 15 shops in Jenin closed for unspecified reasons. On Sunday soldiers opened fire on a resident in the area, but no one was hurt.

GAZANS SENTENCED

An Israeli military court in Gaza sentenced Mahmoud Isma'il Atweh, 18, of al-Shate' camp to 20 months imprisonment and 2 years suspended on charges of illegal possession of two pistols. The court also sentenced Iyad Issa Abu Aridah, 24, and Yusef Rashid al-Qiq, 20, both from Rafah, to 10 months imprisonment and 14 months suspended on charges of membership in a Palestinian organisation.

September 24, 1985

ANABTA CURFEW REMOVED

The Israeli army lifted a two-day curfew from Anabta on the Tulkarm-Nablus road. The curfew was imposed following a spree of stone-throwing attacks on Israeli vehicles.

Six youths from the village were detained and released on bail pending their trial. They are charged with possession of banned books and magazines. They are: Fakhri Urtani, Mohammed Sadek, Mohammed Ghazawi, Issam Abd al-Karim Dabubah, Salah Taher and Aboud Abu Sa'ed.

4 YOUTHS HELD FOR STONE-THROWING

Four Arab youths from Beit Hanina north of Jerusalem were arrested on suspicion of hurling stones at an Israeli Egged bus 10 days ago. Five Israelis were wounded in the incident.

HEBRON TEACHER RELEASED ON BAIL

Israeli military authorities released on bail Yusef Shabaneh, a teacher and preacher from Hebron, after 12 days in detention. Shabaneh will go on trial for incitement.

AL FAJR – Jerusalem Palestinian Weekly

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Calendar of Events

September 27, 28

Theatre: *Sharshouh!* A play for young and old, performed by children from Jerusalem. Written and directed by Radi Shehadeh. In Arabic, English translation available. At the Nuzha/el-Hakawati Theatre, Jerusalem. 7:30 pm. Telephone: 280957, 288189.

September 27-28

Conference: The Middle East Institute's annual conference in Washington, "Seeking New Paths Through the Middle East Labyrinth."

September 27 – January 5

Exhibition: An exhibition of Islamic metalwork from the 7th through the 17th centuries will be on display at the Freer Gallery of Art in Washington.

October 6-16

Music: There will be a Festival of church music at the Dormition Abbey, Jerusalem. For further details ring 719927.

A FRIEND OF PALESTINIANS

Belgium Consul Leaves Jerusalem

On the eve of her returning home, Madam Lucie de Myttenaere, the Belgium Consul General in East Jerusalem, said she regrets leaving the place and people of which she is so fond.

Madam de Myttenaere is due to return to Belgium September 29. She will rejoin the staff of her country's Foreign Ministry. Mr Rimon Dumoulin will replace Madam de Myttenaere in Jerusalem.

During her one year of service at the Belgium Consulate in the Sheikh Jarrah quarter of East Jerusalem, de Myttenaere fit well into the Christian and Moslem environments. "I understood people here," she said, and explained that she made many friends in a very short time.

Jerusalem's first female consul met and made friends with many Palestinian figures, including the mayors of Nablus, al-Bireh, Hebron, and Bethlehem. She also earned medals from various local Christian groups.

Madam de Myttenaere, while admitting she faced some difficulties during her service, said it was altogether a fascinating experience. "I have learned a great deal about the problems of the area by living here, and I enjoyed it immensely," she said. She told *Al Fajr* she hopes to make people in Belgium and in other European countries more aware of the situation here.

Madam Lucie de Myttenaere

Notre Dame

Continued from page 16

Mathes denies there is such a wall. "I have never felt it," he said. The burning political issue of the region is not of interest to Notre Dame. "We are a liturgical centre and we try to keep an equal distance from all parties of the conflict," the Monsignor explained. "We are committed to the Vatican stands on the subject which are dedicated to establish peace in the region and not to go into conflict with any side," he said.

The issue of a proposed local advisory council was accepted but never implemented say other critics. It would be far better to have a local council more qualified to bridge the gap between the centre and the local residents rather than leave it in the hands of foreign representatives. The council could enlist popular support and foster all sorts of activities, they say. It should be in a position to oversee the income of the hotel and to employ it in the best service of the people and the centre itself. Supporters of the idea say that this is the central issue of criticism surrounding Notre Dame. The centre will never be in a position to achieve any of its pre-determined goals without the support of the people, they say. Jiryis Khoury, head of the local Christian Ecumenical Studies, thinks however that the correct thing is to create such a council that would carry out a planned programme within the pre-set goals of the Notre Dame.

Mathes said in response that the formation of such an advisory committee is not just a promise, but will be brought to life as soon as the centre's plans are implemented. "But it is not going to be a board of trustees," said Mathes. "This is a Christian centre of the HOLY SEE. The pontifical decree number three of the Notre Dame states a 12-person committee should be appointed by the pontifical mission. The committee should include experts from all fields," he said. Mathes also said that the centre is not under the auspices of the local Latin Patriarchate but is in direct contact with the Vatican. Therefore, there is no predetermined relationship between the local population and the centre.

Mathes told *Al Fajr* that Notre Dame is continuing with plans for two final projects to be completed in the near future. One is the construction of a cultural centre adjoining the art building. This centre will comprise an auditorium accommodating 500 people, to be used for international conferences and cultural events. It will also include a section for the display of photos of old Palestine and of Notre Dame. Monsignor Mathes hopes this will be similar to the German Goethe cultural institutes.

Mathes said there will also be a Christian museum on ecumenical grounds that would gather Christian relics and antiquities now scattered behind closed doors of the various patriarchates in the country. The aim is to expose them to the public while preserving them at the same time.

Notre Dame has seen enough local history to qualify it for a position in its own museum. Indeed it is a witness to much of Jerusalem history. The first stone in the edifice was officially laid in June 1885, a time when the superpowers of that era were just beginning to establish a foothold in the land. The declared aim was to preserve the holy places and help fellow Christians. Some historians, however think the actual aim was to create a social base supportive and loyal to these foreign powers. Notre Dame was then built beside the holy city as a representative pilgrims centre for French pilgrims similar to the Russian compound on Jaffa Road.

This was achieved by the Assumptionist fathers who first came to Jerusalem as early as 1787. Four thousand square metres of land next to the already-existing French Hospital Saint Louis was purchased. With the help of numerous donations the complex was completed, and, in 1888, the first pilgrims were accommodated. Until World War I, the hotel served as a seminary for Assumptionist students, and also included a famous museum which was unfortunately almost completely destroyed in the later hostilities. ■

Christians Want Advisory Role

Notre Dame Reborn Into Pilgrim's Haven

by Khalil Touma

Counting the glittering jewels in the necklace of Jerusalem is a rewarding, though time-consuming task which clearly begins once one travels up the road from Damascus to New Gate. There looming high on the right is a magnificent building, a mix of contemporary and oriental influence. Crowned with the statue of Virgin Mary and overlooking the walled city, is the century-old Notre Dame. The Vatican centre in Jerusalem has recently arisen from the ruins of war to become a modern, four-star hotel and centre for a variety of activities.

The Notre Dame hotel is considered one of the best in Jerusalem. It has become a haven where tourists enjoy a quiet atmosphere, rich menu and the excellent service of an experienced and trained staff. For Christian pilgrims, a church where mass is said is also available. The resurrection of the hotel in 1978 pushed other hotels in East Jerusalem to improve their standards in order to be competitors.. One local travel agent told *Al Fajr* the hotel even surpasses most of the more famous, 5-star hotels. The absence of a nightclub and jewellery shops, present in other hotels, are marks in Notre Dame's favour, the agent said.

Until the completion of its renovation a few years ago, Notre Dame de France was one of the few buildings left that carried visible marks of the 1948 war between Israel and the Palestinians. Most of the south wing facing the Old City was damaged in the war, becoming virtually uninhabitable as a result of frequent shelling. Because of its position on the frontlines and later in what was termed 'No Man's Land,' the south wing came to be used as an Israeli bunker. The central and northern wings continued to be used by a small number of French Assumptionist priests.

In 1970, three years after the Israeli occupation of Arab Jerusalem, the entire property was sold by the priests to the Jewish National Fund which donated it to Hebrew University. This transaction, however, was bitterly opposed by the Vatican which, in an out-of-court settlement, reacquired the complex in 1973. Christian Palestinians remember with great affection the indefatigable efforts of the Monsignor Pio Laghi, the pontifical representative in Jerusalem at the time, who oversaw the restoration process with utmost care. Plans were then implemented to restore Notre Dame to its position as an ecumenical centre, a process which was officially decreed by Pope John Paul II in 1978.

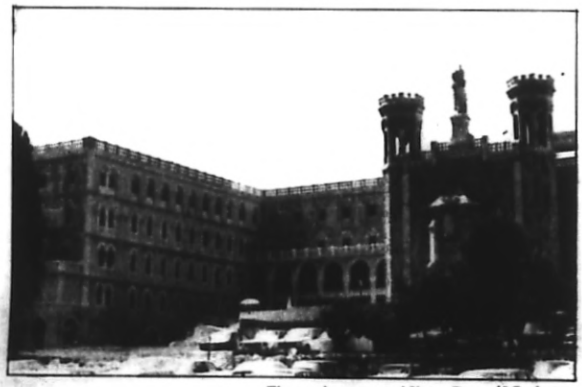
The remarkable development of Notre Dame was completely achieved in 1984 with the opening of a new arts centre inside the Notre Dame complex. The stated aims of the centre include providing local Christian artists with an opportunity to produce, improve and teach their specific skills. Liturgical art is, of course, the main concern. When the centre was first planned, a crafts class was scheduled but cancelled in order not to compete with similar craft centres in the Salisian School in Bethlehem and the YMCA in Jericho. Notre Dame's current director, Monsignor Richard Mathes told *Al Fajr* that the centre will instead sponsor a two-year programme to train waiters and cooks in cooperation with the Bethlehem University Hotel Department and the French Consulate of Jerusalem. Part of the building also houses a pontifical mission with a substantial library, of mostly European volumes. The centre recently began language courses in Arabic, French, German and Italian.

"The centre is not a camouflaged hotel," said Mathes. "We have other activities to foster." These activities, however, have a decidedly Christian tendency.

One of the main aims of Notre Dame, insists Monsignor Mathes, is, however, to make the local church understood by the larger world congregation. The centre then works on developing an ecumenical Christian understanding and its activities serve that purpose. "Ours is a Christian ecumenical centre," says Mathes, but he does not exclude the possibility of dialogue with other religions.

Many local Palestinian Christians agree on the importance of two major achievements. One is the wresting of Notre Dame from the Israelis, an action which saved a very crucial location in Jerusalem from falling into occupation hands. The second achievement is the employment of nearly 160 Palestinians. Their employ means a number of these families will be able to steadfast on their own national soil, despite the present deteriorating economic situation.

Hotel entrance./AO photo.



The newly renovated Notre Dame./AO photo.

Other local Christians, however, say they expected Notre Dame to become a centre for more social and cultural activities where local residents and youth could come, "similar to the YMCA," says Yousef Khoury, an engineer from Jerusalem who oversaw the actual restoration. Instead the place was turned into a pontifical centre and another convent in addition to the hotel, says Khoury.

Monsignor Mathes says Notre Dame was never meant to be another YMCA. During the early planning stages, he says, some ideas for a social centre were heard and some people took them for granted. Mathes says the result though is in the direction of the YMCA, but not a direct copy. This means having a guest house and Christian club, in addition to holding weddings, baptisms and the like.

Al Fajr spoke to other critics who refused to be named. The art centre, some argue, was meant to house local Palestinian artists and craftsmen of all sorts. It should offer them a place to work and to pass on their trade to talented and interested youth. Rather, they say, the place is occupied mainly by the pontifical mission. This argument was actually challenged by others who say the local Palestinians were indeed offered the centre but were unable to make use of it. Mathes says the seven-room centre cannot possibly house all those wanting to set up classes in carpentry, welding, goldsmithing, mother of pearl carving, music and painting, in addition to hotel management and tourism. Most of these crafts are taught in special schools in the West Bank, maintains Mathes, who is against competing with other institutions.

"We had to make out of this combination of ideas more specific, concrete offerings. Besides, we do not want to repeat the efforts of others," he said. "We are interested in real art, mainly liturgical, but so far no one has showed an interest. Look at this scarf," he said, as he pulled the machine-made material out of a drawer. "It is not worth US 25 dollars. But if this was an original handmade item with a cross in the middle, it would be sold for over US 100 dollars. It would also express the spirit of the local Christian people within a liturgical context." Mathes said however, that the pontifical library is only being housed in the centre temporarily until a more permanent location can be found.

Many local Christians complain that Notre Dame is not reaching out to the Palestinian community. They say a high wall between them and the Vatican administration exists. The Vatican representatives should convince the people of their willingness to assist them use the centre for their welfare. These critics say that many times they directed their complaints to the pontifical mission, but were instead always redirected to Monsignor Mathes. They also criticise Notre Dame for paying no attention to the unbearable conditions in which Palestinian Christians are living. The Notre Dame administration does nothing to make their grievances under occupation known to the foreign churches and world Christians.

Continued on page 15